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Hearts are Trumps.

HEARTS ARE TRUMPS.

BY

E. F. BLAKISTON,

AUTHOR OF 'GREAT CATCHES, OR GRAND MATCHES.'

"And in delivering the cards, he made the Heart to be Triumph."

Fox's Life of Latimer.



IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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HEARTS ARE TRUMPS.

CHAPTER I.

"A large town, a wealthy thriving place,
Where hopes of gain excite an anxious race,
Which dark, dense wreaths of cloudy volumes cloak,
And mark for leagues around the place of smoke;
Where fire to water lends its powerful aid,
And steam produces—strong ally to trade."

CRABBE.

WE are aware that it has generally been the custom to disguise those towns, counties, and localities, with whose names any great liberty has been taken, in a species of mufti or domino. "Barchester, Oxbridge, Camford, Harton, Cottonborough," &c., have become "familiar in our mouths as household words;" and on a map we could unhesitatingly point out the exact spot occupied by them. We do not pretend ignorance

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of the motives which have induced so many of our illustrious contemporaries to patronise and adopt this system of innocent ambiguity. We know, from experience, that to some minds mystery is sweet, and a little of it greatly enhances the value of the story; while we are also aware that it is often considered advisable, for especial reasons, to puzzle a certain class of readers. We know that there are in the world numerous good-natured, well-intentioned, over-modest individuals, who take particular delight in thrusting their own craniums into and fitting their neighbours' pates with head-gear, the suitability of which is seldom apparent to any eyes but their own, and which, moreover, have invariably some lurking pin to prevent the wearer from feeling perfectly comfortable in them.

The motive then for mystery is so far praiseworthy; but we feel assured, from personal observation, that if an individual, of no matter which sex, be thoroughly determined to annoy his or her neighbour, or to glorify his or her self, not "all the king's horses nor all the king's men" employed will prevent his or her so doing: and the more attempt at ambiguity is exerted by the

narrator, the more ardent he or she becomes in the business. If Mrs. C. finds a cap adorned with roses, sour grapes, crabs' claws, or what not, which she considers will fit Miss T. to a nicety, on Miss T.'s head she will insist upon placing it, regardless alike of dates and localities. Thus, the cap originally manufactured for a toothless, wrinkled old woman in Deansgate, Manchester, will be ruthlessly thrown at the head of some fair young lady above Bar, Southampton.

A case quite to the point, and which produced very unpleasant results, came under our notice some years ago, and affords a startling proof of the justice of our remarks regarding cap-fitting.

A lady of our acquaintance was obligingly invested with the character of a rat-catcher's dog (one of the inferior actors in a book making some little noise in the circle in which she moved at the time), from the similarity supposed to exist, by her mischief-loving neighbours, between her hands and the front paws of the animal, which were represented by the author as possessing some peculiarities.

Maintaining, as we do, these above-expressed opinions regarding the goodnature of our fellow-

creatures (we mean, of course, those so unhappily situated as to have nothing to do, no object in life, no time to account for), we have determined that our story shall be as much as possible open to daylight; but where mystification is essential, we intend shrouding the character or locality in a veil as impervious to curiosity as that in which the pig-faced lady took her daily airings. So, reader, gentle reader, be not offended at our advice not to waste your valuable time and talents in vain and—we warn you—useless imaginings as to who is who; but throw yourself heart and soul into the interest of the following tale.

* * * * *

True to our principles (and the domino Cottonborough being, moreover, worn so extremely threadbare as no longer to afford the semblance of a disguise to honest smoky old Manchester, who would only stand grinning behind it, amused by our innocent simplicity), we shall not avail ourselves of that or any other mufti; but make so bold as to introduce into, we trust, the politest and most unexceptionable society that noble manufacturing town in its customary suit of respectable black, with well-lined pockets and unlimited credit.

In Manchester, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, our first scene is laid. If there are any among you who have not had the good fortune to visit the Metropolis of the North, we are heartily sorry for you. As our pen could not describe it with justice, we shall not attempt it; suffice to say that those are its chimneys in the background, smoking away like so many young Guardsmen, but, unlike the generality of the "weeds" between juvenile lips, speaking volumes for the wealth and respectability of their owners.

* * * * *

Among many excellent things Manchester can boast of, are some first-rate confectioners' shops, and in one of these a party, consisting of four young men, might be seen on a sultry afternoon in the month of August. The youths were regaling themselves with fruits and ices, and conversing the while in a free and merry manner, apparently quite regardless that there were other occupants of the apartment.

We are fond of young folks, and like to listen to their prattle; and as we did not imagine that secrets were likely to be talked in so public a place as a shop, we called for another cream ice,

and perpared to be amused by their merriment. Though advancing in years, and, as a matter of course, somewhat crusty, we are not curmudgeon enough to imagine that young people necessarily always talk nonsense, that there is never anything to be learnt from their conversation, no benefit to be derived from their society. Far from it: we maintain with Dr. Johnson that the rising generation are particularly entitled to our respect, as being more pure-hearted and honest in their motives of action than we older ones. In the natural course of things the son must be wiser than his father, or how is the world to progress? The young know this and feel it; and if the old would cheerfully acknowledge it as a fact, and honestly give them their due, there would not be so much bumptiousness as there is now; for this very bumptiousness, self-opinionativeness, and conceit, which is so often a subject of complaint with Paterfamilias, as often as not, proceeds from the painful feeling of not being appreciated or understood at home. The caution of age is all very well in moderation, and perhaps youth might go ahead rather too fast without an occasional clog on their wheels; but we must confess to preferring

the companionship of youth and its blunders to old age and its experience.

How many a useful discovery has been blundered out by an energetic youngster, in spite of the paternal injunction, "Bide quiet, can't you!" How many a runaway lad has turned out a great man! Far be it from us, oh ye fathers and mothers, to advocate self-emancipation from parental authority: we only adverted to these cases by way of proving that fathers do not *always* know what is best suited for their children's welfare and happiness; and that it is just as possible for Mr. Smith to make a mistake in the government of his family as the unfortunate and hardly-dealt-with Charles I. in the government of England.

But to return to our young men and their collation. They talked; we listened, and soon discovered that all four belonged to Her Majesty's Regiment of Blank Cartridges, then stationed in Manchester. That regiment had lately returned from abroad, where it had greatly distinguished itself under the command of the famous Sir Mufti Faitcommeçat; but we did not opine that any of these young men had assisted in the memorable

action which had procured for that illustrious general the honours of a K.C.B. We considered them too young to have yet attained martial fame. No doubt they had been but recently gazetted as successors to those whose "places will know them no more." This thought had well-nigh set us musing on war and its melancholy contingencies; our ideas were fast travelling to bereaved homes and sorrowing friends, when the words "Relieving Officer" smote upon our ear.

What, in the name of all that is comical, can these boys have to do with parochial matters, with boards of guardians, or pauper relief? we were mentally exclaiming in astonishment, when the conversation suddenly changed to fillies and their paces.

Horseracing! Alas! that these youths should already have begun to dabble in that most alluring vice.

Lo! with pantomimic quickness, polka and deux-temps were on the tapis!

The jumble—the entanglement of our ideas was complete, and we could only hope that attention and time might unravel and set them straight. We therefore listened intently and patiently for the elucidation of the mysteries.

We had not long to wait before we were rewarded for our trouble by the discovery that, the conversation which so puzzled us had not the slightest reference to the poor-laws or horse-racing; but that the young soldiers were merely talking over a ball which had taken place in the Assembly-rooms on the evening before. How can people dance with the thermometer at ninety and no punkah? It soon became apparent to us—that is to say, it became apparent to us as soon as we had made ourselves masters of the meaning of the phraseology employed—that one of the speakers was seriously smitten by the charms of a certain “filly” (young lady!) with whom he had danced the polka and deux-temps. Her paces in both were perfect; her pasterns were clean (let us hope for the credit of the English maiden that they were); her wind was good; she carried her head well; and was altogether “a stunner!” Moreover, the “filly” was supposed to be by no means indifferent to the manly charms of the speaker. But, alas! for the insecurity of human bliss, it was greatly feared that the respective “relieving officers” (fathers!) might prove, if not positively obdurate and unsympathising, at least very difficult to treat with.

Such is the cream of the interesting conversation to which we had the privilege of listening; and which we trust we have made intelligible to our readers. We continued attentive in the hopes of hearing upon what plan of action the downy hero would decide, and to what tactics he intended having recourse, in order to melt the stony hearts of his own and his fair lady's "relieving officer."

What truly absurd terms are in vogue in the present day! Scarcely anything is called by its rightful designation; and Dr. Johnson must be very far below the surface of the earth, that he does not start up with indignation at the cool manner in which his interpretations are set aside by the rising generation. We do not go the lengths some do in the abuse of slang phrases—they are simply safety-valves for the spirits of the young; and surely all must acknowledge them to be an infinite improvement upon the oaths and coarse conversation of the last century.

We might, according to our wishes, have received a lesson upon the proper way to circumvent the natural guardians of youth, and to bring them

to reason, had it not been for the following exclamation from one of the young men :—

“Did you ever see such a disgusting object?”

We turned our eyes hastily in the direction indicated by the speaker’s outstretched hand, and saw, looking through the window in longing contemplation of the good things, what was indeed a pitiable object—

A girl of about thirteen years old.

Now, God forbid that we should ever apply the epithet disgusting to any of the creatures whom He has made in His own image. But, a more miserable, emaciated, haggard, scarred countenance we had never beheld. It was scarcely human, and certainly furnished some excuse for our military friend’s hasty expression. The figure was literally clad in rags, of which there was but a scanty allowance, and they were of that colour which we can best describe as the hue that betokens extreme poverty: it is a brown which is sadly familiar to the inhabitants of our crowded cities, but mostly unknown to the happier rural folks; a colour into which every other merges from constant use and exposure to a smoky atmosphere. The face was marked on one side by

a ghastly scar, and the eye pertaining to it was closed up. One hand clutched the ragged shawl which protected the head from the fierce rays of the sun, while the other hand hung down loosely and apparently helpless. Such was the apparition which met our gaze, and startled us, almost as much as it had done the young man.

We had but few seconds to make the above observations upon the personal appearance of the child; as, frightened, it seemed, by the exclamations of the officers, the miserable-looking young creature shrank timidly away from her contemplation of the dainties in the window.

“By Jove!” exclaimed another young man, “that is too bad: you have frightened the poor little thing away; she must have heard you.”

“And what if she did hear me?” replied the first speaker; “she had no business to be poking her disgustingly ugly phiz in at the window and spoiling a fellow’s appetite. What a goose you are!”

The gentleman thus addressed made no reply to this uncivil speech, but, jumping up hastily, seized a basket of grapes and peaches from the window with one hand, half a dozen buns from the counter

with the other, and ran out of the shop, calling, "Little girl! little girl!" He pressed them upon the astonished child, adding a shilling from his pocket; and, without waiting until she had recovered from her surprise sufficiently to thank him, returned to his companions, resumed his seat, and quietly inquired of the shopwoman the price of his escapade.

"Well, old fellow, you are a muff!" exclaimed the senior officer of the party: "you are a muff to throw away your money in that foolish manner upon a dirty Manchester brat, when only this very morning you were pleading poverty, and said that you could not afford to treat the Kitson girls to champagne last night, though they almost asked for it; and now to-day you give away a basket of valuable fruit in the most harum-scarum way imaginable. Has some old maiden aunt left you a fortune since morning?"

Seeing the little girl's champion not inclined to take any notice of this attack from his superior officer, one of the others began,—

"Now, really, it was a downright scandalous shame to disappoint poor Bouncing Sally and cheat her out of her champagne. I asked her to

dance the next deux-temps with me from sheer compassion, and gave her a good bumper. By Jove! how she did drink it off! But treating the girls at supper is a deuced expensive amusement for a sub whose relieving officer is not over-tender-hearted. Oh! the look she gave me when she said you were the driest partner she had had all the evening was worth something, I'll assure you. Those Kitson girls are not bad fun, really, in a stupid place like Manchester; though, I suppose, they are stuffed with cotton like the rest one meets here. That Bouncing Sally is the filly for my money; I always fancy the little one is making game of me."

"They are as different as black and white," remarked the officer with captain's epaulettes; "the only point of resemblance I can trace between them is in pronouncing our *preux chevalier des*."

"Smuts," suggested another.

"Yes, capital! Well, they pronounce him as a stale, flat, and unprofitable partner. Now, my worthy friend, do not look so downhearted about it; for goodness sake keep up your spirits. You have only to administer a double dose at the ball

next week, and that will set the matter quite straight again, and you may make either of them Mrs. B. the month after. Which shall it be—Bouncing Sally or Larking Fanny?”

To all this banter the victim vouchsafed no reply; but we do not think that he would have quietly borne much more rallying, as his colour was visibly deepening under the fire of this exquisite wit. A very seasonable interruption occurred, which, by breaking the thread of this interesting conversation, prevented the young officer from having his patience further tried by his facetious messmates.

An elderly gentleman had, unseen, or rather unobserved by our heroes, been sitting at the back of the shop eating sandwiches, drinking mild stout, and reading the *Manchester Guardian*; but his occupation had apparently not engrossed his attention, or prevented his hearing as much of the above-noticed conversation as we had done ourselves, for during the last few sentences he had risen from his seat and advanced towards the door. He then had beckoned to a policeman on the opposite side of the street, addressed a few words to him, which were evidently received with great

deference by that functionary; and then, re-entering the shop, the gentleman lifted up his voice, and thus spoke to its occupants:—

“Young sirs, I perceive that you are soldiers. Having seen you in uniform on parade, I recognise your faces, and know to which regiment you belong. Now, I have for many years, indeed I may say all my life, been under the delusion that a British soldier was a ‘brave’ in every sense of the word, either in the North American or the English vocabulary. I regret much to find that delusion dispelled, and to learn that it is not *always* the case; but I trust that the three examples before me” (indicating with an emphatic gesture of the head the three last speakers) “are exceptions, and very rare ones, to a general rule, and that it is seldom such cowardice is exhibited in the British army as I have had the pain of witnessing within the last ten minutes.

“Yes, I repeat, *cowardice*. Pray, sir, do not interrupt me,” continued the old gentleman waving his hand towards the senior officer, who was becoming excited. “No doubt you think you could mount a breach or lead a forlorn hope (I sincerely trust, for the credit of Old England, you may

never be tried), and yet you point the finger of scorn, apply the epithet disgusting to, you wound the feelings of a poor defenceless woman-child. Shame on you, young men! How dare you so insult one of God's creatures, whom He has made and cares for as much as he does for you, but whom, for His own purposes, He has seen fit to afflict in this present world!

"Mark my words, young men," added the speaker, growing warm with his subject, "mark my words, the day will come, if you all live long enough to see it, in which you will cringe and bow before the shrine of that very same wretched creature, and sue to her for leave to bask in the sunshine of her favour. When *that* day comes you will, somewhat ruefully, remember *this* day, and the reception you will then meet with from her will be your deserts."

The old gentleman paused, astonished, it would seem, by his own unwonted eloquence. The young men looked at each other in amazement, both at the burst of enthusiasm and also at the concluding prophecy; but there was something in the look and manner of the speaker which awed them into respectful silence, and prevented their

replying other than by *sotto voce* mutterings of "by Jove!"

After a few minutes spent in looking at each other, the officers were requested by their elderly lecturer to give him each a visiting-card inscribed with their names and addresses, and he also desired that they would, in their own handwriting, affix the date of the meeting.

The old gentleman then left the shop hastily, and the young soldiers were not long in following his example.

CHAPTER II.

"Fret not thyself, thou glittering child of pride,
That a poor village inspires my strain."

BEATTIE.

OUR scene still lies in Manchester, though we have changed our locality; for that noble city, like all others, has its dark side as well as its bright one, and contains many wretched alleys and miserable cellars as well as fine streets and noble buildings. And it is into one of the former we must now beg our readers to accompany us. You need not pause, fair lady, nor shrink from following, for, though we would introduce you to the abode of poverty, we shall not cross the threshold of vice. To know that poverty exists, to know that cold and hunger are felt within a few doors from affluence and plenty, can hurt no one, but may be profitable to many.

In a low, damp, underground room, or rather

cellar, in a back narrow street, lay the emaciated form of what had been once a beautiful young woman. The sorry dwelling was as clean and tidy as circumstances and the locality would admit, but the appliances of comfort appeared far too scanty for the wants of the sick woman. The hectic flush betrayed consumption; and the thin blue-veined face and hands showed that the deadly disease had made rapid progress, and nearly completed its work.

The restless eye of the invalid turned frequently to the door, as if in anxious expectation of an arrival to cheer her solitude.

"I wish the child would come back," murmured the young woman to herself, "it is so lonely here. I wonder what has kept her so long, and what she has found to amuse her. She said, as she always does, that she was going out to see the sun shine; and it is very selfish in me to wish her back again into this dismal place, where we never see the rays of the sun, though the heat is oppressive; but I feel so much worse this afternoon, that I do not like staying by myself. I do not think my time now can be very long. Oh! how thirsty I am! and this water is so sooty, I can scarcely drink it.

Ah ! well, I shall soon neither hunger nor thirst any more, but be with my Saviour for ever—how I long for the time ! But, ah ! what will become of the child when I am gone ? Ahs me ! hers will be a hard life, I fear. That is the only bitterness death has for me. Mrs. Simpson tries to console me by promising that she will look after my poor darling, and not let her be put into the workhouse if she can help it ; but, still, with all her kind words and good intentions, I am afraid she will not be able to do much, for she has a large family of her own, and her husband is not very steady. Oh ! my poor darling ! How weak and wicked it is in me to fret ; I should feel that she is in the hands of Him who will not forsake the fatherless. I think that is her step on the stairs : she must not see me cast down ; it would weaken the faith I am always trying to inspire her with.”

“ Well, my darling child, what have you to tell me ? Is the sun very bright to-day ? ” said the invalid, cheerfully, as a ragged little girl ran into the room.

“ Look here, dear auntie ! Look here, at what a nice young gentleman gave me,—and they are

all for you : they will make you well ; you never will be thirsty again."

"Why, child, where did you get this beautiful fruit?" exclaimed the sick woman, turning her eyes, which were at first greedily fixed upon the fruit, full upon the girl's face.

"Why! I told you, auntie," she replied, a little proudly, "a kind gentleman gave them to me."

"My own love, I did not doubt your word, but these are such expensive fruits in Manchester. Grapes and peaches are not generally given to poor little shabby girls in the streets."

"Auntie, eat one, please," entreated the child, coaxingly, "and I will tell you the whole story. They were quite honestly got, I assure you ; I did not beg or ask for them at all ; the good gentleman gave them to me of his own accord. And look, some buns also and a whole shilling! He was so handsome, the kind gentleman ; but the other, the nasty one——"

"Nasty! my child, you should not use such an ugly word."

"Yes, auntie, he *is* nasty ; you would have thought him nasty if you had heard him call me a *disgusting object*. I hate him, that I do, with all

my heart!" continued the child, stamping her foot with emphasis.

The aunt seeing that something had happened greatly to distress the child, and that she could scarcely restrain her sobs at the recollection of it, forbore to question her further till she should be more composed, but gratefully and slowly sucked the delicious fruit.

The little girl (our old acquaintance at the shop-window) watched this proceeding with evident satisfaction; and, by degrees, told the whole story, painting the beauty of the "kind gentleman" and the ugliness of the "nasty man" in vivid colours. Children are thorough connoisseurs in beauty, and never allow any one is handsome whose physiognomy does not attract them, or whom they may have seen a prey to evil passions.

The child would not be prevailed upon to taste more of the fruit than a very small bite out of a peach, so fearful was she of depriving her aunt of what she felt certain would restore her to health; but with a very good appetite eat a bun, which she could not persuade the invalid to touch; and then sat for some time on the edge of the bed,

with her arm round her aunt's neck, talking over the events of the morning, relating everything she had seen, and laying plans for the disposal of her treasured shilling; when the door opened quietly, and they were surprised by the entrance of their neighbour, Mrs. Simpson, followed by a policeman.

The niece, who was so intently occupied by the consideration of her intended purchases, did not look round at the familiar step, and, therefore, did not perceive who stood in the background; but the aunt, with quick perception, not only saw the visitor but instantly divined, as she thought, his errand. "Could the fruit she had been so eagerly devouring been stolen?—not by the child, she was sure—but might not some one, in the fear of detection, have pressed it upon her? Was she not unwittingly the receiver of stolen goods, which lay upon the table to testify against them?"

In an agony, she who had not stood for weeks sprang to her feet, exclaiming,—

"Oh! spare her! she is innocent—she has only been made a tool of."

"My good young woman," replied the police-

man, kindly, "I am not come here to harm anyone. Pray, lie down again and do not frighten yourself unnecessarily. I am only come to inquire how you are, and whether you are in want of anything."

And the officer sat down by the bedside, and in a soothing tone asked how she felt to-day, and told her that he was requested by a charitable person to discover what sort of a character she bore ; and that, finding from Mrs. Simpson that she was a very respectable well-conducted young woman, he had called to see her himself, in order to report her case to his employer. He then went on to inquire into the nature of her illness, and whether she would like some medical advice or preferred to go to an hospital.

In deep gratitude to her unknown friend, the invalid explained the hopeless nature of her complaint, and her feeling that she could not survive many days, but timidly suggested that death would lose its sting if some one would protect her orphan niece, whom she was leaving utterly without a friend who had the power to assist her.

After a little more conversation the policeman

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departed, leaving both aunt and niece bewildered by his apparition; but, the former much comforted by his assurance that she had found a protector for the child and assistance in her time of sore distress.

CHAPTER III.

"In Britain's isle, no matter where,
An ancient pile of building stands
To raise the ceiling's fretted height,
Each panel in achievements clothing,
Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing."

GRAY.

WE now request that our readers will favour us with their company in a jump from the city of Manchester, over the space of seven years, into the centre of the county of Oddshire—far away from all the smuts and blacks of factory chimneys and their so-called plebeian adjuncts and associations, to mix with the time-honoured aristocracy of the land.

Comptayne Grange is the first locality which will engage our attention ; and, as both the house and its inhabitants are destined to hold a prominent place in the following story, it is right that we should give it every precedence.

At the time we first became acquainted with the Grange, which period is about coeval with the commencement of the events we are about to relate, it was, as the Guide-book for the county informed us, "the seat and property of Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, Baronet, in whose family this magnificent estate had descended from father to son in regular succession ever since the Conquest."

We do not pretend to vouch for the exact truth of this statement—we only quote our author; but this much we have gathered from reliable sources, that in all the civil and internal commotions which at different periods have disturbed the peace of Great Britain, there always has been a Comptayne on the winning side. Thus if one Comptayne displayed the Red Rose, another member of the family was equally proud of showing the White Rose; and the lost estates of one branch never failed to reward the attachment of the other to the victorious power. While one brother forfeited his head and his lands in consequence of his adherence to Royalty, another scion of the same house sheltered himself beneath the garb of the Puritan, and obtained the sequestered acres of his race as the reward of his sign-manual to the death-warrant

of the King. So, among all the chances of war and changes of government, Comptayne Grange remained the seat and property of a Comptayne; and, when the title of Baronet was invented, they contrived, of course, to obtain one of the earliest in the market.

As ages rolled on, the pride of the Comptaynes increased, and they came to be known as the "proudest family all along the country side." But this extreme exclusiveness and pride on their part did not give offence in general,—neither did it appear to be considered in the light of a defect by the neighbours and old inhabitants of Oddshire: the good people seemed to think it the especial property of the Comptayne family. It was Comptayne pride; and, like the old tankards and "My Lady's" point-lace, legally entailed with the estate of Comptayne Grange.

The first time that we entered the park gates, passed through the splendid old entrance, and strolled beneath the lofty oaks which formed a lengthy avenue, we thought we had seldom seen a finer specimen of a baronial residence; it was one that might have been the fitting abode of royalty. Indeed there are still many traditions

extant that kings, queens, and princes of the blood have reposed under its roof; and many of the dormitories are still distinguished by names relating to those royal personages who have at different times condescended to sleep within their walls.

On a second visit and a little closer observation, we perceived too evident marks of decay. The glory of the mansion was on its wane; and, unless the hand of man was stretched forth to arrest it on its downward course, would soon be numbered among the things of the past. It was melancholy to behold it, and we inwardly wondered whether the ruin was the effect of carelessness or necessity. A few inquiries soon satisfied us that it was the latter.

The house, which stood in the centre of a spacious and well-wooded park, never could have been remarkable for architectural beauty when viewed in detail, as the mixture of gables and castellations had been made with more regard to fancy than taste, and the original building was of an early date and a most barbarous design. Nevertheless, in spite of the numerous incongruities, the effect was good and decidedly noble

and picturesque. A moat in perfect preservation surrounded the house, and a drawbridge was ready for use at the principal entrance, but it was very seldom let down, being reserved for special occasions and important visitors ; ingress and egress to the mansion being obtained, in an ordinary way, by means of two permanent bridges of hideously staring red brick, one on either side of the house. Moats are common enough, even now, round the old halls in the midland counties, though very rarely in good preservation, being generally partially filled up and the remainder used as duck-ponds or stews for fish.

The park we noticed as extensive, and contained many fine specimens of oak, yew, and beech, and beneath their shade browsed the remains of a herd of various kinds of deer. But the main stock of animals inhabiting the ground appeared to be horned cattle in every variety of age and description, together with some young horses of no very aristocratic pretension. In fact, the only conclusion we could draw from appearances was, that the park contained a lay, which our companion assured us was really the case.

From sundry white marks upon most of the largest trees, we began to suspect that, as the old breeds and deer for which the estate used to be famed had departed to meet the exigencies of their masters, the time was now come for the oaks and beeches to follow the example of their fourfooted companions.

We had heard rumours that Sir Hildebrande Comptayne was in difficulties,—now we felt sure of it; and our inquiries were answered to the effect that the estate was mortgaged to its full value, and that the Baronet had now nothing whereupon to raise money but the oaks.

For this ruinous state of things the then occupier of the title and estate was comparatively little to blame: he had inherited an entailed estate, with many mortgages upon it; and, though the nominal possessor of many a broad acre, very little of the rents for the same ever got into his pocket. His predecessors had all lived up to their income, and a little more; they had distinguished themselves in all those vices and follies, horseracing, hard drinking, and gambling, which marked the English gentleman of the



“olden time.” Thus, each owner of the Grange had left his successor an increase of debt upon the estate, and now it was saddled to the utmost with mortgages and annuities to younger children.

On nearing the mansion we saw no reason for accusing our informant of misrepresentation or even exaggeration, as the house proved to be only partially inhabited. The broken casements in one wing proclaimed that the owls and the bats had undisputed possession ; and that the former might “warm their five wits” in perfect security. It was sad to see an old place so given up to ruin, and we bethought of Crabbe’s lines as we gazed upon the decay around us—

“The fine old mansion yet was left to stand,
Not in this state, but old and much decayed;
Of this a part was habitable made;
The rest—who doubts?—by the spirits seized,
Ghosts of all kinds, who used it as they pleased.”

On the side where we perceived that our approach had been noticed, things were not quite so bad ; and we were admitted to view the state apartments by a pompous old butler in silver knee and shoe buckles, attended by a single footman in the tawny orange livery of the

family, with the cognisance of the Comptaynes, a griffin's head with four horns, and the motto, "Cedo nulli," embroidered on his coat-sleeve.

We entered the hall, which was of spacious dimensions and very lofty; the ceiling divided into compartments, each containing the above-mentioned griffin, with all the quarterings and impalings to which the illustrious family could lay claim. The sides of the walls were adorned with a great variety of ancient armour and moth-eaten banners, each claiming its own peculiar history. It had a damp and almost sepulchral smell, and might easily have been mistaken for the family mausoleum. On one side of the hall was the banquetting-room, and on the other the saloons; neither of them ever used, as the family resided in the right wing, and these dismal old apartments were seldom visited except by the honisng stranger. They were chiefly remarkable for their noble proportions and some exquisite oak carving, for the furniture and fittings were principally curious for their antiquity, and the marvel was how their component parts had stuck together during so long a period, and they might have



served as a good illustration to Cowper's poem of "The Sofa."

A large oak-wainscoted room bore the name of library, more from courtesy than from the contents of its walls or the occupations of its inhabitants, the former being principally adorned with genealogical trees, coats of arms, and family portraits; a few black-letter volumes, chiefly valuable in the eyes of their owners for the escutcheons displayed on the binding or fly-leaves, lay about the tables. Of real literature there was none—a want, we apprehend, which had never hitherto been acutely felt by any of the family.

The portraits which adorned the walls of this room and other parts of the house were of every age from the most remote to the present day, for it had been a time-honoured custom in the family that each eldest daughter and eldest son with his wife should sit to the best portrait-painter of the day. A very motley collection was the result of this arrangement, and the pictures of Comptayne Grange formed an illustrated history of the rise and progress of the art of portrait-painting in Great Britain. Each panel bore the signature of the painter; the name of the person represented, with

the exact arms and quarterings to which they were entitled, and the date of the execution ; so that no one ever heard at the Grange, what is so often the answer to the question, Who is that ? or Who is that picture by ? I really do not know exactly, but we think it may be papa's grandmother or his great-great-aunt ; neither is there ever the frequently-made mistake between Sir Peter Lely or Wright of Derby. Such answers would have condemned any baby of the house of Comptayne to bread-and-water diet in the nursery cupboard.

The rest of the house was decorated in a similar manner to the library, and the furniture and hangings, though originally of value from their curious design and fabric, were in different stages of dilapidation, and quite in character with the exterior of the mansion. Now, we must plead guilty to a weakness for old-fashioned furniture, carvings, and tapestry ; but the shabby, rickety contents of the apartments at the Grange are not quite to our taste for every-day use—indeed, we always considered it a service of danger to trust ourselves on one of the gilded chairs in the drawing-room ; and agree in the opinion of the young gentleman who, upon paying his old aunts of

ninety-four and ninety-six their respective annuities, remarked, "Age *may* be carried to excess."

This is, then, the condition in which the reader must be pleased to imagine Comptayne Grange; and whether the owners *would* not improve upon the state of things if they *could*, or whether they *could* not do so if they *would*, it remains for this story to develop; and we trust before the conclusion of the last chapter it will have become quite apparent to the most casual observer. It now becomes our duty to introduce the inmates of the house, whose history will form a conspicuous feature in the following narrative.

CHAPTER IV.

"For how should mortal man in mortal verse
Their titles, merits, or their names rehearse?"

CHURCHILL.

YES, we fear that we shall find it a very difficult business to describe, so as the illustrious family should itself approve, the foundation upon which it rests its claim to be distinguished above all others. But, before the promised introduction takes place, it will be advisable to apprise our readers of a very peculiar weakness in this family, the ignorance of which might be the cause of an irreconcilable feud, or, at least, lead the out-loud reader to be guilty of a serious breach of good manners. It regards the pronunciation of the name. It is spelt, you must observe, COMPTAYNE; but the proper method of pronouncing it is this,—*Compton*—with a strong emphasis on the last syllable. Any *lapsus lingue* on this point was sure to be met with frowns of serious displeasure, to say the least, from any member of this most exclusive house.

The strong propensity which the vulgar mind—we do not mean the poor, the wholly uneducated, but the essentially vulgar mind—has for affixing or inserting the syllable *ing* to a name was a frequent source of discomfort to them, and had the feudal system, with full power over the lives and property of their vassals, existed in these later days, the probability is, that the unlucky mortal who ventured to address Sir Hildebrande or Lady Compting would have been made to taste the utmost rigour of the law. As it now rests, the fact is well known in the adjoining market-town, and has served as a salutary warning to the inhabitants thereof that the late Dowager Lady Comptayne, while condescending to purchase biscuits at the shop of Mrs. Bakewell, the principal confectioner, did most severely admonish the said vender of cakes in consequence of her mispronunciation of her ladyship's name; and, on the reply of the affrighted female, "Yes, my lady, yes, Lady Compting," authoritatively desired the coachman to "drive on;" and never again were the Comptayne liveries seen to stop at the door of the unfortunate Mrs. Bakewell's establishment.

As being forewarned is being forearmed, we



trust the reader will be guarded, and take care not to commit this solecism on good manners, as the indiscretion *might* materially affect the sale of this book, from which we, naturally enough, expect to share with our publishers a very considerable profit.

Having now carefully cleared the way, allow us, gentle, and we hope, for our own credit, genteel readers, to introduce you to the present owners of Comptayne Grange, or rather the apparent owners thereof, as the estate in reality was something like an orange, the inside of which had been carefully sucked out, the suckers in question being the mortgagees. The residents, then, as we will call them, were, firstly, Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, Baronet, a tall, thin, high-nosed man, with faded-looking blue eyes, and a general careworn expression of countenance, which before trials came thick lacked any expression at all beyond the consciousness that he was the fifteenth baronet of that name. This last fact seemed ever in his thoughts and the guide of his every action.

"In measured time his feet were taught to go;
Behind, from time to time, he cast his eye,
Lest this should quit his place, that step awry."

His frigidity of demeanour excited impatience, and the studied courtesy of his speech provoked the anger of any one who thought it worth while to be annoyed by such a perfect automaton. Enveloped most tightly in his own pride and self-confidence, this honourable baronet never perceived the annoyance felt by others in his company; and imagined that all upon whom his shadow fell must be ready to fall down and worship him—Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, of Comptayne Grange, Baronet.

Lady Comptayne, who stands second upon our list, had been selected by the late baronet as a wife for his son (for the marriages in this family were considered of as much importance as those of royalty, and manœuvred and diplomatised for much after the same manner); owing that honour to the undeniability of her descent from Edward the Confessor. Her ladyship was third daughter, out of a family of nine, of General Sir Robert Quelfossey, K.C.B., Governor of the Sandwich Islands, and was in every way a most fitting mate for her "high-born" husband. She had been handsome in her youth, but her beauty, being of blonde type, and, moreover, depending much upon

son was, of course, courted and flattered by the world, as the estate, all were aware, was entailed. The title was certain, and a very respectable one from its antiquity; but the younger branches "would not do."

Judith, the eldest daughter, had strictly followed the rule laid down for all eldest daughters of the house of Comptayne. She was of the wishy-washy Saxon blonde complexion, only endurable in very young ladies. She had been, when youth had sided with her, a very fine and pretty woman; but now—what shall we say? We will shelter behind Dean Swift, and plead his excuse—

"Could poets or could painters fix
How angels look at thirty-six?"—

and pass on to the next one—Abigail. This fair lady was several years younger than Judith, and consequently better looking; but the pride that gleamed from her eyes and curled round her lips entirely disfigured what might otherwise have been a very pleasing face.

Beatrix, the youngest of the family, was a girl who, if pets had been the fashion at the Grange, would have been the plaything of the house. She was not quite so fair as the rest, and possessed all



their share of animal spirits, which she was obliged painfully to repress in the presence of her parents, who could not understand anything approaching to mirth; and were intolerant of the slightest deviation from the prescribed rules of decorum and icy coldness of demeanour which, we will do them the justice to say, they followed to the letter themselves.

As these young ladies were known, or rather suspected, to be dowerless; and as most prudent men of rank and title (or their mammas think so for them) cannot afford to marry without a few golden charms on the lady's side; and as no representative of the moneyocracy had the slightest chance of a civil word from the parents of these highly-born and high-nosed young women, their several seasons had as yet been productive of no result. And the badly-dressed, supercilious-looking Miss Comptayne and Miss Abigail Comptayne obtained but few partners in the dance except what their position claimed from courtesy.

Though this highly-born well-connected family would not stoop to alliances with the moneyocracy of the land, yet they did not appear to consider living in debt, existing in a state of perpetual

Pardon, dear reader, this somewhat lengthy discussion, into which we have been led by our wish to prove, that in spending what they had not the Comptayne family were only one of a class; but, in the steady refusal to mend their dilapidated fortunes by matrimonial speculations, they were decidedly eccentric, and unfashionable, and reprehensible; and in the latter point, no doubt, certain of their creditors will be found to agree with us in our opinion. We should prefer pride of birth yielding precedence to pride of honesty. But the Comptaynes of Comptayne Grange were poor—very poor, and proud—very proud. As we cannot alter them, we must e'en take them as they are, and write about them accordingly.

If our readers have taken up these volumes in the hope of meeting with perfection, they will, we give notice, be woefully disappointed; therefore, if they cannot make up their minds to see life as it is, and not as it ought to be, we recommend them shutting up the book and returning it whence it came; for

"Whoever thinks a faultless piece to see,
Thinks what ne'er was, nor is, nor e'er shall be."

CHAPTER V.

"Pshaw! a man
Whom nobody that is anybody knows."
SHERIDAN KNOWLES' "HUNCHBACK."

ON a gloomy afternoon in the month of November, 18—, the ladies of Comptayne Grange specified in the foregoing chapter were seated at one end of the spacious apartment called the library, busily engaged in various occupations. We do not know what they were doing, but we think we may safely assert that it was neither knitting, netting, nor crochet which employed them. The recess of a bay window, containing a large round table laden with articles of a very miscellaneous description, was the resort of the daughters, where, sheltered by an old-fashioned, high folding screen, they could follow their avocations unobserved at least, if not quite unheard, by the other occupants of the room. Nearer the chimney, upon the hearth of which blazed logs in the style of the olden time, sat Lady Comptayne with her own peculiar pigeon-holed table before her (Da-

venport being too modern a name to apply to any piece of furniture connected with Comptayne Grange, and not knowing what it was called in that establishment, we have taken editorial licence and improvised this word). With the pigeon-holed table before her, her ladyship was seated, apparently oblivious of the drizzling rain or any other external discomfort, so intent did she seem upon her work, which was one of the most difficult tasks imaginable,—namely, trying to make meet two ends which were equally determined not to meet—the banker's book and the housekeeper's bills.

Add up the columns as she would, first up and then down, the poor lady could not make the sum total of the credit side more than five hundred and twelve pounds seventeen shillings and tenpence halfpenny, while the debit was enough to make her blood run cold. Not that the house-keeping was extravagant—far from it. They entertained their neighbours very little; but when they did, the dinners, had they been served up anywhere but at Comptayne Grange, or upon anything but plate engraved with the Comptayne arms, would have been considered absolutely



pernicious ; but the fact that terrified her ladyship was, that she knew that five hundred pounds at least was already bespoken in other ways. There were subscriptions to hounds and assemblies, which, they thought, could not be dispensed with ; there were the boys' allowances, which they always anticipated, therefore could not wait for ; there were several servants in arrears with their wages ; and last, though not by any means the least, the dresses for the Drawing-rooms and Court balls of the last three years had not been paid for, and a letter lay upon the table containing a civil, though rather peremptory, reminder from the *modiste*, who no doubt had received a little account of her own from some silk-mercator may be, who had had his memory jogged by some one else, and so on. We might speculate until we had filled pages with our imaginings about those who were suffering some trifling (?) inconvenience through the unpunctuality in money matters of this illustrious lady.

We do not give all the above remarks and reflections as those passing through Lady Compayne's mind while she sat leaning on her elbow and biting her pen, gazing intently upon lines and groups of figures, which, alas ! poor lady, will not

change their form for all her looking. There still stands five hundred and twelve pounds seventeen shillings and tenpence halfpenny credit, and twelve hundred and eighty pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence debit, which two ends will as surely meet as the North and the South Poles.

Now, as her ladyship puzzled and puckered her face in a most unbecoming manner, considering whom she shall pay and whom she shall try and persuade to wait a little longer—for retrenchment in the daily expenditure of the household she felt to be an utter impossibility, as she had already reduced them to such short commons as to have had various contentions, and have experienced some difficulty in quelling a rebellion in the servants' hall—she was interrupted by a remark addressed to her by the eldest daughter, Judith:—

“Mamma, I forgot to tell you a piece of news that Burchell told to me last night. These girls will not believe it, but I do; for I think it very likely to be true, as Burchell's brother rents the next farm, you know,—and he ought to be good authority.”

“Well, Miss Comptayne, let me hear the news,” said her ladyship, rather impatiently; “and then

I shall be a better judge whether it is likely to be true or not."

"Why, mamma, Burchell says that 'the Gorses' is let for five years; and that the people are coming immediately."

"Is that all your news?" replied her mother; "did you not hear Sir Hildebrande mention that last week?"

"No, indeed!" they all exclaimed. "Now, please, mamma, tell us all about it."

"Burchell also said," continued Judith, seeing her mother did not seem inclined to speak, "that the new tenant is a Mr. Stubbs from Manchester. Is that true, mamma?"

"Perfectly true," said Lady Comptayne shortly.

"A Mr. Stubbs from Manchester!" ejaculated Abigail, with disappointment in her tone. "Oh, dear! I did hope that somebody was coming with whom we could associate, whom we could notice a little—for we have so few neighbours; and since Amy Fitzmaurice was married we have not a real lady to speak to."

"I wonder," chimed in Beatrix, "what the new tenants are like; whether there are any young people; and whether all Manchester people

do, as Hugo says, 'wear cotton gowns and leave out their h's.'"

"What does it signify to you, Beatrix? What nonsense you do talk!" replied Abigail. "These new people are nothing to us; they are proved not to be persons we can associate with; in all probability they will never speak to us or we to them all the five years. What such people as those are like is of no possible consequence to us."

"As it happens, young ladies," interrupted Lady Comptayne from behind the screen, in the peculiarly satirical tone used by her ladyship when exceedingly "put out" and obliged to act against her inclinations or prejudices—"as it happens, young ladies, the new tenants at 'the Gorses' are likely to become acquaintances of yours, as Sir Hildebrande and I have decided that we shall call upon them immediately on their arrival; and no doubt we shall find them very agreeable neighbours."

The reader must not imagine that because the last sentence is so easy to read, that it was as easy for Lady Comptayne to say. No, indeed; we who have a way, peculiar to editors, of getting behind the scenes, are prepared to affirm that the last concluding dozen or so of words had cost her

ladyship two sleepless nights. The new tenant had caused Sir Hildebrande and his lady one of the stormiest debates they had ever had, and the most uncomfortable week they ever spent together. We will do these proud, disagreeable-mannered people the justice to say that they seldom quarrelled, for in most cases Sir Hildebrande's will was law; he ruled his household with an arbitrary sway—not the result of moral superiority, but because his temper was such that no one cared to provoke it by opposition when they could avoid it. But in this case, Lady Comptayne had ventured to differ from her lord, as she could not tamely submit to the indignity of being obliged to associate with people from Manchester. They had, however, come to terms—that is to say, the lady had given in; she had yielded to arguments at present a mystery, but which we may have occasion to allude to at some future day; and her ladyship being a woman who never did things by halves, finding herself obliged to wear a mask, determined so to wear that mask that no one, not even her own daughters, should discover that she was acting under compulsion: she was not the woman to be checkmated in the sight of all the world.



No wonder that the young ladies who had not shared our privilege of being behind the scenes, and had not heard the convincing arguments which had so mysteriously converted their lady mother,—no wonder, we repeat, that they should open their eyes to their fullest extent on hearing such hitherto deemed heretical opinions; and being told that they, the Misses Comptayne of Comptayne Grange, were intended to make acquaintance with, to exchange visits with, the family of a Mr. Stubbs of Manchester.

Amazement kept them silent. Her ladyship continued,—

“The family at the Gorses only consists of Mr. Stubbs and one niece, his heiress. He is a very wealthy man, and is going to fit up and furnish the house in a very superior manner.”

Here the young ladies again exchanged glances, for had they not time after time heard their mother ridicule the wealth and taste of the Manchester people? What could have changed her so suddenly? They prudently kept their remarks to themselves.

“I hope you will like Miss Stubbs, girls: we must be civil to her, as, no doubt, being used to a

town life, she will find the country very dull just at first."

Civil to a Miss Stubbs of Manchester! Oh ye shades of departed Comptaynes!

"Mr. Stubbs," continued Lady Comptayne, repeating the name so often apparently with the view of accustoming her aristocratic mouth to the plebeian monosyllable—"Mr. Stubbs, Sir Hildebrande says, is a very nice, sensible old gentleman; and he is to be proposed to day as a member of the hunt; and then, of course, they will get vouchers for the assemblies this winter, and *we* must try and persuade them to join our Archery Club."

All this was not said by her ladyship in a hurry—by no means; she spoke slowly and with distinct enunciation, but in such a manner as to admit of no interruption, and perfectly to silence all comments. It was a way she had, and her daughters knew better than to ask a why or a wherefore; and, though the blood of all the Comptaynes was rising in the face of Abigail, she was obliged to keep silence and to wonder in her heart of hearts what all this could mean.

Now, Lady Comptayne, without being a cross

or a violent woman in general, had a temper of her own ; it was known to be her ladyship's very own peculiar property—none of her family shared it ; and, though not quite so ungovernable as that of her husband, was not one whit less disagreeable : all were equally cautious not to provoke it for a trifle. Thus, one by one the young ladies silently left the room to talk over the matter which had so astonished them—namely, this most puzzling and mysterious change in the opinions, or rather perhaps the tactics, of their lady mamma.

Judith, though possessing a fair share of the Comptayne pride, was not above getting all the news of the district from the lady's-maid. She was a thorough Comptayne in principles and actions ; but, nevertheless, had a sort of misgiving when she reflected upon her advancing years, and saw little prospect of a change in her condition, which, face it as she would, was not a very pleasant one, or one she had any wish to hold in perpetuity, though she was Miss Comptayne of Comptayne. She had, moreover, sundry by no means pleasing recollections of a brace of spinster aunts who formerly resided with their grandmother, the late Dowager, at "the Gorses," but who now lived in



cheap London lodgings, still in a state of vinegarish expectancy of an offer from some gentleman with whom it would not be beneath their dignity to ally themselves. In her inmost heart Judith Comptayne had a virtuous horror, which she would not have confessed to mortal breathing, of in any way resembling those interesting spinsters.

Though Judith Comptayne had turned up her aristocratic nose to its utmost limit at the proposals of Sir Charles Blake, the heir of an eminent as well as affluent "city man;" yet, it was with very mixed feelings that she heard of the final dismissal of the wealthy baronet, and more than a hundred times afterwards did she wish that she had not been a Comptayne. So notorious had been this refusal, from the manner in which it had been done by Sir Hildebrande, that no other suitor had since dared to aspire to the hand, or even cast an eye upon this high-born demoiselle. She knew it—she felt it. The yoke imposed upon her by family precedents was galling. The thralldom of "caste" was, at times, almost unbearable. Judith began to think that anything which would in a manner break the monotony of her touch-me-not existence must be a relief; and thus she silently



hailed the advent of even "a Mr. Stubbs from Manchester."

Abigail was a thorough Comptayne—her grandmother in a second edition; but though the binding was, of course, rather more modern, there had been little done in the way of revising or correcting. Being six years younger than Judith, and, moreover, heartwhole, and not possessing either an impressionable mind or sentimental disposition, she had no temptation to relax one iota of her double share of family pride. Abigail was perfectly contented with her condition, for, besides being blessed with good health and a tolerably easy temper, she had seen so little of her sister's horror, the two maiden aunts, that she was not yet imbued with a horror of ancient spinsterhood. Abigail bore the privation of many a luxury, nay almost necessary, entailed upon them by their straitened means, with a cheerful spirit. To be a Comptayne of Comptayne Grange was enough for her, and the hours she would pass in emblazoning arms and quarterings and in studying the genealogical tree were the happiest of her life. Thus, while Judith would sit moody and shivering over the small fire in their scantily furnished apartment,

musings over the tale just related by Mrs. Burchell concerning the splendidly arranged luxurious dressing-room of the bride, Lady Blake, whose own maid was Mrs. Burchell's sister, and who was delighted to detail to her relative all the minutiae of the family in which she resided, and to set off the wealth of her lady against the high family with which Mrs. Burchell was so proud of boasting her connection, Abigail would rub her blue hands, toss up her head, laugh at the vulgarity of those "city people," jump into bed, and be fast asleep in ten minutes. Abigail Comptayne was undeniably the right person in the right place.

It was with more indignation at her mother's speech than curiosity at the motive that she followed her sister out of the library.

Beatrix, as the slight observation made by her on the Stubbs family must have proved her to be, was a very different creature from her two elder sisters. She was only lately come out, therefore her mind was fresher and her sentiments more unworldly; she had not yet been soured by the disappointments of successive "barren seasons" (as we once heard a season, in which no offers came, designated by a Belgravian mother). She

had been presented at the last Drawing-room, where her blooming young beauty had made a great impression ; but as she was known to belong to the unapproachable tribe, her numerous admirers did not dare to draw near, though her sunny smile and laughing blue eyes made many, both male and female, long to pull down the barrier and obtain possession of the lovely Beatrix Comptayne. She had all the principles and doctrines of the family at her fingers' ends, but not one in her heart ; and her actions so frequently belied her words, as to procure for her many a reproof and lecture from her mother, and kept her sisters in constant anxiety for fear that Beatrix should do something to disgrace the family.

Beatrix lingered a little behind her sisters, finishing her work, and in the hope that her mother might ask her assistance in the accounts, which she evidently could not settle to her satisfaction, though she had puckered and puzzled her face over them the whole afternoon. We know, but Beatrix did not, into what a hopeless entanglement her ladyship had got. Finding her staying in the room did not do her mother any good, Beatrix quietly stole away and joined her sisters,

whom she found in deep cogitation at the dining-room fire.

The entrance of the youngest seemed to rouse the other two out of their reverie, and the pent-up feelings of Abigail at last burst forth, as she angrily exclaimed,—

“What in the wide world can our parents Sir Hildebrande and Lady Comptayne be dreaming of in arranging to call upon—to make friends with a Mr. Stubbs of Manchester? To invite him to our house—to notice him in public in the assemblies and archery meetings! I am distressed! I am horrified! No Comptayne ever did such a thing before! What will become of us? We shall be ruined: we, who have kept ourselves free from the contamination of every species of vulgarity these hundreds of years!”

Apparently this exclusive young lady did not deem gossiping with maid-servants as included in the latter clause.

“What can papa have been about to let the house to a low vulgar man like that? However, nothing shall persuade me to take any notice of them. I know what is due to myself and my family better than that. I shall take the first

opportunity of informing Sir Hildebrande of my intentions. Now, girls, what do you say? Of course you will both join me in making a stand for the dignity of our house."

"Well, Abigail," said Judith, "I am quite as much surprised at what mamma has just said as you can be, because it is so perfectly different to anything I ever heard said in this house before. She must, I am quite sure, have some very strong reasons for changing her mind on this point, because she has always been so very particular about her associates: and—and suppose," continued Judith, not knowing exactly what to say, while longing in her heart for some change that would break the weary monotony of their lives without compromising their dignity, "suppose we wait a bit and see what all this leads to—what is the meaning of it. It may be only a joke after all." (Judith did not *think* the last sentence.)

"A joke? no such thing," replied Abigail. "Mamma was never more serious in her life. Why, she put on her regular don't-contradict-me tone."

"Well, then, I think we may trust Lady Comptayne not to do anything beneath the dignity of the family whose name she bears."

"I thought so too, Judith, once," said Abigail, "but now I do not know what to think. I intend asking papa the meaning of all this nonsense this very evening."

"I advise you not," remarked Judith, significantly.

"Now, Abigail, dear, please do not say anything to papa about it," pleaded Beatrix, who had hitherto kept silence. "You know that just now papa has got something to trouble him about Hugo. I do not know what it is, but I have noticed that he has looked very gloomy ever since last Sunday, when he got a letter from him; perhaps he wants more money, and papa has not got any more to give him at present, you know, for we all heard him say that when the oaks were all sold he should have no more money for anybody. I wish we had some more money; I wonder why we are so much poorer than other people of title. I do not want anything for myself, but I should like mamma to have as nice a dressing-room and as handsome silk and satin gowns as Lady Blake, instead of being always obliged to wear that gloomy black velvet."

"What nonsense you do talk, Beatrix! You are enough to put one out of all patience," angrily

exclaimed Abigail, "comparing Lady Comptayne of Comptayne Grange with Lady Blake of nowhere at all! Just as if black velvet and the family diamonds was not a far more suitable dress for Lady Comptayne than pink or blue satins, which are all very well for a Lady Blake, the wife of a 'city man,' who most likely made his money in tea or blacking, and who adorns his vulgar wife in jewels just bought at Storr and Mortimer's."

Now, the sight of Lady Blake's handsome pink satin and splendid diamonds had excited something very like envy in the bosom of Judith, who had stood near her ladyship for half an hour in the crush-room at St. James's; but as these feelings had been carefully concealed from her sisters, they knew not the cruel stabs they were inflicting upon her in their innocent allusions to Lady Blake and their comments upon her bridal finery.

Being again puzzled what to say, and not liking to permit this remark to pass unnoticed, Judith was much relieved to find that Beatrix good-humouredly continued,—

"Well, I suppose you may be right as regards the dress, Abigail; and I do not so very much

care about it, as mamma always looks handsome in whatever she has on; but, still I cannot help wishing that we had some more money—not for myself you know, but I should like that poor papa's face should not cloud over every time anything is said about paying a bill or buying anything fresh; and see how mamma has been for several days worrying over those tiresome accounts, and puckering her face into wrinkles all about wretched pounds, shillings, and pence, and, I much fear, farthings also. I really, for my own part, cannot see how we can pinch and screw any closer. I felt quite ashamed of our liveries in London,—they looked so very faded and shabby beside those of other people, particularly at the Drawing-room.”

“Ashamed of our liveries, Beatrix? What can you be thinking of?” exclaimed Abigail, fairly roused, for she was devoted to the “tawny orange.” “You did not see one single servant besides ours with the crest embroidered on the coat-sleeve, so different from the vulgar herd! And as to the shabbiness, why people of an old family like ours do not care to have everything about them spick-and-span new like a Brummagem button-maker.

To have everything fresh in that manner is so intensely vulgar."

"Well, perhaps it is," replied Beatrix, who now found that she had made a worse blunder than the first one, and feared that it might be repeated by her indignant sister to the heads of the house, when she knew from woeful experience that a long lecture would be the result; "but, you see, Abigail, I do not understand much about it, and I am so fond of seeing everything bright and pretty. That is the reason I am so fond of flowers."

"Then, I wish you would keep to your flowers, you foolish little thing, and not trouble yourself with talking about what you do not understand. You will get yourself into a nice scrape some day, and disgrace the family."

Now, Beatrix was so used to being told that "she would disgrace the family" that she had ceased to pay much attention to the remark. Moreover, she was not quite clear in what way she was to effect the disgrace; but as she knew argument with her sisters upon any point had better be avoided, she wisely left the room; though she could not help saying to herself, "I wonder who Miss Stubbs is like—whether she is pretty, and how old she is."

CHAPTER VI.

"The stranger much of life has seen,
Been poor, been rich, and in the state between;
Had much of kindness met, and much deceit,
And all that man who deals with men must meet.
Not much he read, but from his youth had thought,
And been by care and observation taught.
'Tis thus a man his own opinions makes:
He holds that fast which he with trouble takes.

CRABBE.

"THE GORSES," about which so much has been said in the last chapter, was the dower-house of the Comptaynes, and had, until the death of the present baronet's mother, always been the abode of some elder or junior member of the family. But, when the last dowager was laid beside her lord in the great vault, the reigning baronet announced his intention of letting the place during his lifetime, as he could no longer afford to lend it; and his maiden sisters repairing to a cheaper residence in London, "the Gorses" was put in tolerable repair and advertised "To let."



The place was old-fashioned certainly, but comfortable-looking enough to have attracted many a tenant, but for five years no one came near it. The style was of the black and white Elizabethan order, with high-pointed gables, curious stacks of chimneys, and casemented windows; and stood on a spacious lawn adjoining the park of "the Grange." Though, compared with the latter place, "the Gorses" was in a better state of repair, yet the bad terms upon which the doors and windows appeared to be with their frames, and the general aspect of the interior, scared away many who might have treated for it had they had money to spend; and the well-known exclusiveness of the Comptaynes prevented any "man merely made of money" from venturing in such close proximity to "the Grange."

Great then was the astonishment of the county when, after waiting so long, it was announced by the steward, and confirmed by Sir Hildebrande, that "the Gorses" was let for a term of seven years to Joshua Stubbs of Manchester, umpwhile spinner, now esquire.

No sooner was the lease signed than possession was taken, and workmen and articles of every

description flocked down. Mr. Stubbs himself arrived to give his own orders.

Mr. Stubbs was a man of wealth, but as he had made every penny of his money he knew its exact value in the market. No one was better aware than he was what a ten-pound note was worth : he did not expect to get ten guineas for it, neither was he a person to be satisfied with receiving only nine pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence in exchange. Those who worked for him, if they did not know it before, soon found out this peculiarity, and as he was scrupulously honest in his dealings they were obliged for their own sakes to be so in theirs. Accordingly, the upholsterers, paper-hangers, and painters did their work well and expeditiously, and the inside of the old house soon began to look very unlike itself indeed.

Mr. Stubbs was also a man of considerable tact and shrewd observation, and the remarks he had heard made upon the bad taste of some of the *rouleaux riches* caused him to seek advice in those points of fashion and ornament upon which he had the good sense to know, though, perhaps, he might not always feel, himself necessarily deficient. Thus, the internal and external decorations



at the Gorses were such that the most fastidious could find no fault, for wealth and taste evidently went hand in hand through every arrangement.

The country which surrounded the Gorses was very pretty, and, as it stood on the extreme verge of the Comptayne estate, overlooked on three sides the domains of other landowners, and from the windows you perceived that there were neighbours not very far off. An excellent Scotch gardener, sent down by Henderson, received carte-blanche to make a pleasure-ground out of a neglected piece to the left of the house, which, for some reason not very apparent, had always borne the title of shrubbery; and the transformation effected by him and his efficient staff gave promise of an unlimited supply of flowers for the next spring.

And the worm-eaten, ghost-haunted, mouldy old Gorses was transformed into the cheerful, handsome residence of an opulent country gentleman. Gardeners and labourers swarmed about the grounds. Horses and grooms abounded in the stables. The coach-houses were filled with elegant carriages, and domestics of every sort bustled about the mansion.

In about a fortnight from the date of the conversation which we noticed among the ladies of "The Grange," Mr. Stubbs and his niece were comfortably settled in their new abode, and the broad rosy face of the former and the magnificent India shawl and Chantilly veil of the latter had appeared in the little village church of Comptayne, disturbing very seriously the devotions of many of the assembled congregation, both male and female. Even the Misses Comptayne, from their elevated position, in what the people would call "My Lady's Opera-box," could not refrain from some anxiety to get a glimpse of the "new tenants."

Very little curiosity was destined to be gratified on that day as regarded the lady, for Miss Stubbs never once raised her veil; and though she looked round the church herself, the lace was too heavy to permit any one to form an idea of the features behind it; and the little world was obliged to content itself with a full view of the pattern of the shawl, which all were agreed in pronouncing extremely well put on,—those learned in such matters oracularly asserted that it was real Indian.

Upon the conclusion of the service, the new

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tenants left the church hastily, took the field-path to "The Gorses," and were soon lost to sight.

Many were disappointed on that day, and none more painfully so than the Misses Comptayne of Comptayne Grange, whose sufferings were enhanced by the necessity they were under of concealing their feelings from the world and even from each other.

The debate at the subsequent county meeting regarding "the Stubbses," whether they should be admitted to the *réunions* as county, or whether they should be excluded as *counter*, was long and rather stormy. But as Sir Hildebrande Comptayne (the exclusive) spoke so decidedly in favour of the first arrangement, and seemed to consider any hesitation on the part of the other gentlemen as a personal insult to himself, the measure was necessarily carried. Though many made a reservation to themselves, in thus giving their votes in savour of so serious, so unprecedented an innovation upon "time-honoured" custom, that they need not call upon these people; and by taking no notice of them at the balls or other county meetings, they would soon get tired of intruding themselves where they were not wanted.

But this would not do with Sir Hildebrande : others must do as he did. He intended eating humble pie as regarded the Stubbses, and so must they. He and his lady intended to call upon them ; therefore others must do the same. He intended inviting them to dine off Comptayne plate ; others must show them the same attention. He was determined upon this point, and, as usual when determined upon any point, he managed to carry it. The consequence was, that everybody within a radius of ten miles called upon Joshua Stubbs, Esq., and Miss Stubbs his niece.

“ Not at home ” was the answer given to all.

Those of the county who imagined that the Stubbses, uncle and niece, would not have stirred an inch from their door for a fortnight, fearing that in their temporary absence they might miss seeing a visitor, returned home rather disgusted as well as disappointed ; and with the edge of their curiosity not a little whetted by the glimpse they got of the arrangements inside the door, and the first-rate style of the servants who answered their summons and received their cards.

That Mr. Stubbs of Manchester could afford to wait for the honour of acquaintance with the

aristocracy of Oddshire was *tant soit peu* mortifying, after the struggle it had cost most of them to order the heads of their horses turned towards "The Gorses."

It was evident that Miss Stubbs was to make her *début* at the first Assembly, and that, until then, nothing would be seen of her except the Indian shawl and the Chantilly veil, in which she appeared with the greatest regularity twice each Sunday at church.

Mr. Stubbs, we remarked above, was a shrewd man, and his shrewdness showed itself in all he did. He knew that human nature was intrinsically the same whatever coat might cover it, and he was certain that, by showing a certain amount of indifference to the advances of the squirearchy, he was every day rendering his position in the society of the county more secure. He had his suspicions that to visit him and admit him into their circle had not been done as a matter of course, as an act of civility and neighbourliness towards a stranger; and he felt that he knew to *whose* influence, or rather to *what* influence, he owed the numerous pieces of pasteboard which daily lay on his hall-table; and he further knew that, if human



nature had gone so far, it could go a step or two further ; and if the squirearchy, for reasons of their own, resolved to condescend to make his acquaintance and patronise him, do it they would, in spite of a little cool indifference on his part. They would not allow themselves to be stalemated by him ; and the more he might appear to recede, the more their pride would be touched, and the more they would advance, until they had quite forced their acquaintance upon him.

We shall have many opportunities as we go on of forming our opinion as to whether Mr. Joshua Stubbs of Manchester was wright or wrong in his judgment of those among whom he had placed himself.

CHAPTER VII.

"His pride is alarmed; he cannot conceive the reason, why one he has all along considered would be proud of the least mark of his countenance, should avoid taking an even chance for so great an honour as a bow or a nod."—B. THORNTON.

THE "new tenants" at "The Gorses" having excited so much curiosity in Oddshire, we presume that our readers, both young and old, are dying with impatience for an introduction. As we are certain that our friend Mr. Stubbs will not be offended at anything we may say or do, we will take the liberty of ignoring the fact of the solemn butler having said "not at home," and make our way into the house.

At the breakfast-table sit the inmates of "The Gorses;" consisting of Mr. Stubbs, Miss Stubbs his niece, and Mrs. Davenport, the companion or chaperon of the latter. Now for a little description in order to put the reader *au fait* with the whole thing.

Joshua Stubbs, Esquire, as he is now called, had been the principal of the firm of Stubbs and

Co., cotton-spinners in Manchester. He began his life about the same time that Manchester began hers; and, by dint of untiring industry, aided by the luck which usually attends well-directed perseverance, had risen from an errand boy at half-a-crown a-week to be the head of one of the most flourishing concerns in that city. He had been from childhood the follower of one fixed idea, to the attainment of which he had always applied every power of his energetic nature. His first purpose in life had been securing the comfort of his widowed mother: he was determined that, through his efforts, she should live like a lady; and like a lady Mrs. Stubbs did live for many years, provided with every luxury she could require, and many more than her simple tastes knew any use for. After his mother's death Joshua still continued industriously making thousands upon thousands. Not that he loved money for its own sake, or was miserly and avaricious. No: his purpose was to raise his firm to the top of his branch of the trade; and, in due time, he did it. Having accomplished this, his second fixed idea, to his utmost satisfaction, a third took possession of his busy and fertile brain, and it was to

accomplish this last one that we find him a tenant of "The Gorses."

Mr. Stubbs, having passed his sixty-fifth year, knew that at his time of life, though hale and hearty, it would not do to wait long; what he had given himself to do had better be done with as little delay as possible, or he might be deprived of the pleasure of realising his third fixed idea. He accordingly devoted a stated sum to expediting the movements of those employed in his alterations. Thus it was that the aspect of things, both inside and outside the house, had changed with such apparently miraculous rapidity, and the family were comfortably located before a less energetic man would have done thinking about it; and certainly there they were before the neighbours had recovered from their astonishment or half talked the matter over.

Knowing now somewhat of Mr. Stubbs' antecedents, the reader may perhaps, if of a very aristocratic or snobbish temperament, be inclined to draw back and to exclaim—"What vulgar people these must be! No wonder that the Misses Compayne expressed so much horror at the idea of living in their proximity!" But, pray, dear



reader, suspend your judgment for a few chapters, and allow us to suggest that you are rather premature in your conclusions. Though a "Manchester man," Joshua Stubbs was no vulgar soul. Gentility, we will remark *en passant*, even at the risk of incurring the displeasure of the Belgians, is not confined to or influenced by localities; and we doubt not we could as easily discern a real gentleman in Manchester as in St. James's. But to return to Joshua. He was no vulgar soul; and, moreover, he was a well-made man, with a goodnatured, truly Lancashire face. He was not awkward; his hands were not larger, nor his feet broader, than was necessary for an old man's use. In dress he was scrupulously neat, and sufficiently in the fashion to escape singularity; he neither snuffed nor smoked, therefore was always clean.

The hat of Mr. Stubbs was the only remarkable point about him that *was* peculiar—a broad-leaved, low-crowned, white beaver being invariably his head-dress, summer or winter. Nothing could induce him to change either the fashion or the material of it; nor do we believe that, had he yielded to persuasions, the alteration would have

been at all to his advantage. The hat suited him, and he suited the hat.

In manners Joshua Stubbs was a gentleman, in the best sense of the word. We do not mean to imply that he was polished, for that would have been, from his position in life, an impossibility, and the assertion would only tend to draw down discredit upon our story from the discriminating reader. He was thoroughly goodnatured, and had an honest, open-hearted, truthful way about him—a consideration for the feelings of others, and a scrupulous delicacy in his behaviour towards the female sex, which could not fail to strike all those who look beneath the surface, and are qualities which, we fear, are not always blended with that suavity of manners and amiability of speech which is supposed to indicate polish and high-breeding. In Mr. Stubbs, politeness was the result of goodness of heart, and was therefore always ready for use at a minute's notice, and its genial influence was felt alike by rich and poor. In his society everyone felt comfortable, provided they were honest and straightforward in their intentions; otherwise no one could bear unflinchingly the steady gaze of his intelligent grey eyes.

In speech Mr. Stubbs was a little abrupt and sparing of his words, but, unless greatly excited, the provincial accent of his youth was scarcely apparent. Now, most genteel readers, we hope that you are satisfied that there was no vulgarity about our "Manchester man."

In religion Mr. Stubbs was a strict adherent to the Established Church of England in its simple form, and denounced alike, as blasphemous, the epithets of "High and Low Church." In politics he acted, as he thought, most consistent to the honour of a free-born English vote-holder. Now let the Whigs and the Tories fight for him!

Miss Stubbs, the next on the list, was—a-hem!—was remarkably well dressed that morning, as she presided over the breakfast-table, in a dark blue Irish poplin, and had a very pretty bracelet and handsome rings upon the hand with which she presented her uncle with his chocolate. She had, moreover, a black satin apron, embroidered with a wreath of rosebuds. If the readers are not satisfied with this description they will have to wait until they get a better; as, upon second thoughts, we think it would be unfair on our part to treat Mrs. or Miss Reader better than all the mistresses



and misses of the county were treated, by introducing our heroine before the proper time appointed by Mr. Stubbs—*i.e.*, the Ball.

Mrs. Davenport, the young lady's duenna, deserves a few words, as she was an especial favourite of ours, from her elegant manners and the nice taste she evinced. She was a middle-aged widow lady, of extremely prepossessing appearance; a baronet's daughter and an officer's widow; highly educated and very accomplished, with a large share of good sound sense, and was exactly the person to bring out a wealthy young heiress.

The domestication of such a lady as Mrs. Davenport in the family of Mr. Stubbs was another and a very strong proof of the superior judgment of that gentleman. She was no relation, no connection—simply a stipendiary companion; though we must do her employer the justice to say that, except on pay-day, the latter fact was never brought forward in any way. Mr. Stubbs, with genuine good sense, saw that a companion such as Mrs. Davenport, a lady who belonged to, had mixed in, good society, and perfectly understood all the *bienséances* of the great world,



was really essential to himself as well as to his niece. It was necessary for him to have in his house some one to apply to—some one in whom he could feel confidence, to consult with regarding the manners and customs of a world which was totally new to him, but which, he was quite determined, should not appear so. Mr. Stubbs wished to enter the society of Oddshire as if he had been used to it all his life, and the joke he had with himself was never to look surprised at anything, and the more he saw astonishment was expected from him the more indifference he affected. As regarded his niece, the companionship was still more requisite, for the worthy Joshua had tact enough to see that whatever might be forgiven him as a man, and a rich man, in no way must Miss Stubbs offend; and that it would never do for a young girl, with her expectations as his heiress, to enter the world under no better chaperonage than that of an old cotton-spinner, and with no more knowledge of life than that learned at a London boarding-school.

It was with feelings of unmixed satisfaction that Mr. Stubbs, through the medium of his niece's schoolmistress, to whom he had confided his posi-

tion and its difficulties, came to terms with Mrs. Davenport. On their first introduction both were mutually impressed in each other's favour, and the lady gladly and gratefully accepted the liberal arrangements offered by Mr. Stubbs, and was soon installed as the friend of his heiress.

To account for a lady of Mrs. Davenport's social position, as a baronet's daughter and an officer's widow, being obliged to "go out," we must state that the lady in question was one of a large family of daughters; and had early married a promising young soldier, who fell in battle, leaving her with five lads to provide for, on little more than the Government allowance to a captain's family.

Thus far have we endeavoured to introduce the inmates of "The Gorses;" and we trust that our readers are sufficiently pleased with the glimpse that they have obtained of them to be content to travel together sociably for a good many chapters.

Breakfast with Mr. Stubbs, ever since, as he has often said, he "could afford the luxury," has been one of the great events of the day, and to which he always devoted one of his morning hours. When alone he generally read the news-

papers and talked to himself ; but since he became a family man, and his niece presided at the tea-urn, he, after he had got over his business, as he termed a good beefsteak and the heavy news, talked to the ladies while concluding his meal with muffins and marmalade. He would not curtail his meal upon any but a very urgent account, and reckoned it the pleasantest part of his day. From force of habit he still looked over the markets and share-lists ; but that done with, he was ready for any amount of small talk and entertaining gossip. He never allowed any sort of business, except, perhaps, the arranging of a party of pleasure, to intrude upon his leisure hour, but devoted himself to do the agreeable and discuss the contents of little notes, &c., which he called the "light literature" of the day.

On this particular morning he found, among sundry others, one which was evidently a cause of intense satisfaction. The old gentleman's eyes brightened as he broke the seal, and his face assumed the expression often noticed by his clerks when one of his favourite ventures had succeeded.

"There, Sally, *it* has come at last ! I knew it would. I could have staked a couple of thousands

upon it," exclaimed he, tossing over to his niece a delicately-tinted paper. "What an enormously large piece of humble pie some of those big-wigs must have swallowed!"

The missive in question proved to be the voucher requisite for securing admittance into that inner sanctum of high life, the County Assemblies. To our ignorant and vulgar eyes this bit of saffron-coloured paper appeared merely to contain an intimation of the days on which these said assemblies were to be held; but, by listening, we were informed that it was only to the *élite* of the county that these notifications were sent, and woe to the unfortunate wight who should venture to intrude himself at the entrance to the Temple of Fashion on the strength of merely hearing that there was to be a ball on that particular night. The lucky recipient of a voucher, on the contrary, might henceforth hold up his head with the best, and was considered as a person "one might speak to."

It may possibly be surmised, from the pleasure evinced by Mr. Stubbs on the arrival of the saffron paper, that he was passionately fond of dancing. No such thing, young lady. Joshua

Stubbs, we may safely assert, never danced in his life, and had no intention of beginning in the Oddshire Ballroom. But Joshua always had been, as we have remarked once or twice before, a man with one fixed idea, and the fixed idea in his mind at that time was to go to the assembly. He had made up his mind that he would mix with the county families, and that the invitation to do so should come from themselves, without any intervention or toadying on his part. He wished to be sought out and noticed for his own value (be it remembered we have used the word *value* intentionally). Mr. Stubbs was a man of the world, though by no means a worldly-minded man, and had been used to deal with persons of every description. He rather prided himself upon understanding human nature perfectly—that is, human nature in the raw, as he called it—and could generally discover pretty quickly the guiding influence of the men with whom he might chance to have half an hour's conversation.

This sagacity, combined with the nicest tact, enabled him, in most cases, to manage his men, and thus he obtained what he wanted. Had our friend been an unprincipled, low-minded indi-

vidual, such gifts as these would have been dangerous to his associates ; but his aims being both high and good, his mental powers were enlisted on the side of truth and justice. All presumption and humbug of every sort provoked his hostility, and to punish and unmask the latter were the only species of malice in which he was ever known to indulge.

"Well, Sally," resumed Mr. Stubbs, when he had finished his well-satisfied chuckle,—“well, Sally, dear, are the dresses ready for next Tuesday? I know I can depend upon you, Mrs. Davenport, for seeing that Sally is attired as my heiress ought to be. I will find out the proper time to go, and settle all the ticket business. Bless me, what is this?” exclaimed the old gentleman, as his butler entered with a note.

“If you please, sir, Sir Hildebrande left this at the lodge five minutes ago, his own self.”

“Oh, very well : let me see what is inside ; it may require an answer before I go out.” He reads,—

“DEAR SIR,—Lady Comptayne and myself hope that you and Miss Stubbs will give us the

pleasure of your company to dinner on Tuesday next, and afterwards join our party to the Assembly. We dine at seven o'clock. Lady Comptayne begs Miss Stubbs will excuse her not writing herself, but her ladyship is confined to her bed this morning with a severe headache. With our united best compliments,—I remain, yours very faithfully,

“HILDEBRANDE COMPTAYNE.

“The Grange, Nov. 18.”

Mr. Stubbs, on reading this note, burst into a hearty laugh, to the surprise of the ladies, who could not see any particular wit to excite such merriment.

“Upon my word,” said the worthy man, as soon as he could articulate, “this excellent baronet will be the death of me some day! What a famous triangular corner of humble pie the poor man has gulped! But it is very clear that he has not been able to persuade her ladyship to swallow as large a piece. I can imagine, as well as if I had been there, the charming domestic scene which has preceded the writing of this poor little note. But, my dear ladies, I beg your pardon; I am puzzling

you. You do not know the man, and, therefore, cannot understand my meaning; you will see it all plain enough some day. At present, you perceive, Sir Hildebrande Comptayne writes me word that he and Lady Comptayne wish us to dine with them, and go to the ball in their train. But we will do no such thing: we will go to the ball 'all alone by ourselves,' as Paddy would say. I intend introducing my heiress myself. She is not going to owe her place in society to the patronage of my Lady This or my Lady That."

"Now, I will just write a civil excuse, and then the dog-cart will be at the door, and I must be off to see the meet. Please to look after the workmen a bit, or we shall not have the drawing-room finished in time for our ball on Twelfth-night; and then take a good long drive. I shall most likely go on to Oddborough to see what the news is, and find out what the magistrates are really going to do with those poachers they caught in Springwood yesterday. So do not expect me much before dinner-time."

And gallantly kissing his hand to the ladies, Mr. Stubbs left the room, and repaired to his own sanctum, for the purpose of answering Sir Hilde-

brande's note which had caused him so much amusement. Ere he did so, he indulged in another hearty laugh at the expense of Sir Hildebrande, whose character he seemed quite to understand, and whose present tactics did not seem quite so great a mystery to Mr. Stubbs as they did to the Misses Comptayne. The note was written and sealed, rather ostentatiously, with a broad red seal, bearing the impress "Joshua Stubbs," in contradistinction to the large coat of arms which had secured the Baronet's missive.

Mr. Stubbs knew to whom he was writing, and what he (Mr. Stubbs) was about, which is more than you do, reader. There was a "method in his madness," and with that quotation we will close our chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Permit thy earliest friend,
Who propped, in infancy, thy tottering steps,
To lead thee to thy throne,—and thus fulfil
His fondest vision."

TALFOURD.

THE much-expected Tuesday at last arrived—the evening on which such laudable and anxious curiosity was to be gratified. The grand old Assembly-rooms, which had witnessed the *début* of so many generations of county beauties, were lighted up and prepared. The orchestra was arranged with the usual precision and taste; all was in readiness for action.

What tales these old walls could tell, thought we, as we surveyed the preparations before the arrival of the company, at which time we, grown too old for such gay doings, retire to our roost—what tales these old walls might tell if they could speak! Yes, indeed; and it is as well, perhaps, for the parents of the rising generation

that they are not permitted the use of tongues as well as ears, for they probably could tell many a story relative to the younger days of the discreet matron who enters with a fair daughter on each arm—tales which would prevent lectures against listening to soft nothings from the sterner sex being attended to with any great veneration by the young *débutante*.

Young people will talk nonsense and will listen to nonsense (or what appears to us in the sere and yellow leaf to be nonsense) to the end of time, let mammas preach and old maiden aunts shake their heads ever so much. We do not grumble at them—we have no wish to put old heads on young shoulders—we do not want to see persons wise before their time: age comes soon enough to us all. The great point with us is to sink gracefully into our armchairs, and be content to see the young reigning in our stead. Horace Walpole remarks, “It is sad that experience should come at the wrong end of life, when one has no longer any use for it.” We venture to differ from this great authority, and observe in our turn that experience, properly used, should smooth the downhill of life by showing us the

littleness and real uselessness of many things which were once the main scope of our existence, and should make us more lenient to the follies and fancies of youth.

The ballroom was almost full when Mr. Stubbs, Miss Stubbs, and Mrs. Davenport entered. Nearly all the *élite* of the county was there assembled; sauntering about or standing in groups near the fireplaces, most of them on the tiptoe of expectation for the advent of the strangers, though but few of them would have acknowledged that they had ever given them a passing thought. Why Mr. Stubbs of Manchester and his niece should have become such objects of interest to so aristocratic an assemblage as the gentry of Oddshire is, we trust, still a mystery to our readers, but one which we hope soon satisfactorily to clear up. Many an eye was furtively cast in the direction of the door; both young and old felt the excitement, and more than one fair cheek reddened on its owner being caught in the act of looking by the possessor of another equally curious pair of eyes.

At last, just as the steward of the evening was about to desire that the business which brought

them together might begin, Mr. Stubbs entered the ballroom with a lady on each arm, and leisurely walked up the apartment, apparently taking no particular notice of anyone, but commenting to his companions upon the decorations and proportions of the rooms. And not until he could no longer help it did he see Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, who had advanced towards him with great eagerness, but who, when he was seen, received rather a stiff greeting from the "Manchester man." The overacted cordiality of Lady Comptayne was met with a stately coldness, which somewhat abashed her ladyship, who was accustomed to be treated, wherever she went, as a Comptayne of Comptayne. For many who did not really recognise the immense superiority of that illustrious family over the rest of the world, were good-natured enough to behave as though they did; and, in matters of no consequence, humoured and allowed them every precedence. Mr. Stubbs was a fresh comer into the county, and was not expected to know how to treat a Comptayne: moreover, he had his own private reasons for not knowing, for not understanding the vast difference between the baronet at "The Grange" and the rest

of the baronets chronicled by Burke. Therefore, passing by that family with only a very slight introduction of "my niece and *heiress*," he advanced towards Sir Arthur Beauchamp, with whom he exchanged a neighbourly shake of the hand, to whose wife he made his very best bow; and then waited for her ladyship to request an introduction to Miss Stubbs,—which she immediately did, and, kindly taking the young girl's hand, begged to be presented to her friend, Mrs. Davenport.

In a quarter of an hour Miss Stubbs had made many acquaintances, and even an experienced head might have been bewildered, for every one appeared eager to have a closer view, and to make themselves and their families known to the heiress. All this time her uncle kept edging away from the neighbourhood of the Comptaynes; but Sir Hildebrande was not going to lose sight of them, and soon might be seen making his way through the crowd, holding by the arm a young man, who (if we may judge by his countenance) was not a willing prisoner. The youth he introduced as "my eldest son."

As we have already devoted quite as much

space as we can spare, and we think the occasion warrants, to the description of Captain Comptayne, we need only observe that, upon this occasion, he looked extremely bored and fatigued by the exertion of walking the length of the ballroom. On approaching Miss Stubbs, and after acknowledging the introduction by a sleepy bow, he mumbled a few almost inaudible words, and stuck his elbow out triangularly ; with the air of a man, who thinks he has but to ask and he will be sure to get, and has not the slightest idea of ever meeting with a refusal. In this case, however, his certainty of success was premature, and he was civilly informed by Miss Stubbs that Major Beauchamp, Sir Arthur's nephew, had forestalled him in his condescending intention, and that he (Captain Comptayne) must retire—in a discomfiture all the more disagreeable because he felt sure that not a few pair of eyes were a witness of his defeat, and some were rejoicing in it. He secured Miss Stubbs for the next dance, and was content himself with being "second best" to Harry Beauchamp.

"That fellow is always getting in my way," muttered he, as he fell back out of the circle of

dancers. "As my superior officer there is no chance of being even with him. Not that I care a straw about dancing with the heiress that every one is raving about; but a fellow does not like to be dragged all down the room for nothing,—and so deuced hot as it will be presently."

We cannot help a little commiseration for Captain Comptayne's position. He, not a "dancing man," had been obliged to promise his father that he would open the ball with Miss Stubbs. He, a Comptayne, had never so degraded himself before as even to speak in public (we will not enter into the gallant officer's private affairs—that would not be polite) to anything so low and vulgar as a Miss Stubbs of Manchester. But Sir Hildebrande had called to his aid some unanswerable argument—probably the same he had used to prevail upon his wife to call at "The Gorses;" and as, in that case, he had gained his point, his son had consented to be walked up to the heiress; and lo! this was the result—he had to walk down again. Harry Beauchamp had been beforehand with him. *He*, a Comptayne of that ilk, had been refused by a Miss Stubbs of Manchester, and all the world—*i.e.*, all *his* world—had seen it.

Sally having been led off to join the dance by Major Beauchamp, and Mrs. Davenport being engaged in a quiet chat with Lady Harriet, Mr. Stubbs leant his back against the wall and looked on. We will take the opportunity of properly introducing the heroine to our, we trust, impatient readers.

Miss Stubbs was arrayed in a rich white satin, with magnificent lace flounces; on her arms, neck, and head were splendid pearls, while blush-roses adorned her sleeves and bodice. We are not skilful in describing dress; therefore, we depend upon the young ladies who look over these pages (no one acknowledges to reading a novel now-a-days) to arrange the materials we have placed at their disposal, and array the heroine in a truly elegant and fashionable manner. But, though Madame Somebody in Regent Street had done her best, and produced a dress quite worthy of her well-known taste, yet the voluminous folds of satin and numerous ruches of tulle (correct us, fair ladies, if we do not use the proper term),—in fact, all the art of the celebrated modiste, did not, could not conceal a spinal deformity: a curve in her back was perceptible. The heiress was not

quite straight; one side appeared shrunken, and the corresponding arm was similarly affected. The long, drooping ringlets of glossy brown only partially covered a deep, white seam, which, crossing the cheek, passed over the eye, and divided the fair forehead in a merciless manner. The appearance of Miss Stubbs, at first sight, was startling; and it required all the presence of mind, which is the result of good nature or good breeding, to repress any outward indications of the general surprise, so totally were the company assembled unprepared to see an heiress utterly devoid of personal attractions. After all the conjectures that had been made upon her, and all the curiosity she had excited, nothing of this sort had been anticipated. The ladies deserved great credit for the ready tact and good nature with which they welcomed the stranger without betraying the slightest surprise at her unprepossessing appearance.

A maliciously disposed person may perhaps suggest that the hand feminine is always more eagerly stretched out to the plain female than to the beauty; and that, in this case, all could cordially greet Miss Stubbs without the slightest

soupçon of jealousy; but for the credit of the women, we will not attribute such motives to them, but state what we believe to have been the case—namely, that pity, for what was so evidently the result of accident, was uppermost in the bosom of everyone. It was perfectly plain to all, from the rare beauty of one hand and arm, that the deformity of the other was not natural; and the fairness of one cheek proved that casualty alone had marred the loveliness of the other. Her smile was so sweet, her teeth so white and even, and her voice so melodious, as to impress all who spoke to her most favourably. Before she had been half an hour in the room, the discriminating portion of the assembly had ceased to pronounce her “a fright.”

The heiress, having now made her *début*, had no lack of partners; and her style of dancing was quiet and ladylike, preventing the defect in her figure from being in any way remarkable, while her *naïveté* and freshness, her pleasant manners and agreeable conversation, fully atoned to the rational part of the community for her want of personal attractions, while the reflected glory of her uncle's thousand

more than concealed her deficiency from the eyes of the rest.

Captain Comptayne obtained his one dance; but though, in obedience to paternal command, he solicited a second, he did not get it. The manners of the heiress to him were so freezingly polite, that he, generally so glib of tongue when he took the trouble to be agreeable, and so accustomed to be courted when he did not choose to exert himself, felt completely nonplussed; and the gentleman who had determined to be most condescendingly polite to the heiress of the "old cotton party," had not a word to say for himself.

CHAPTER IX.

“No man is his neighbour’s equal, for no two minds are similar.”—TUPPER.

THIS ball, like every other agreeable thing, came at last to a conclusion; and the various parties returned to their homes in different degrees of bad and good humour. Ere they retired to sleep off their excitement, it was the general custom to enjoy a quiet supper at their respective houses, at which they discussed all the little matters connected with the evening’s amusement; and, on this occasion, the good people considered that they were quite entitled to half an hour’s extra gossip. Three of the conversaziones we shall take the liberty of recording, as, by that means, we can best give our readers the “sense of the county” regarding our heroine.

“Did you ever see such a fright to bring out into a county ballroom!” was the exclamation of

Judith Comptayne, almost before the carriage-door was closed.

"Did you ever see such vulgar people!" was the simultaneous ejaculation of Abigail.

"Her smile was so very sweet and gentle, and her dress was lovely," softly pleaded Beatrix.

"I consider the whole thing an unmitigated bore," drawled out Captain Comptayne.

"I do not care what any of you *think*," said the Baronet, with some asperity; "but I desire, nay, more, I insist, that *my* tenant and his family are treated with civility by everybody in *my* house."

Lady Comptayne sighed deeply, but said nothing; and this speech from their father effectually silenced the young people, and not another word passed on any subject till they got home.

Now, it is worthy of notice that no names were mentioned in the above apostrophes which are here faithfully reported; and the silence on that point proved how completely the tenant at "The Gorses" had obtained the ascendancy over the minds of "The Grange" family. They apparently could think of no one else; and, after

the disappearance of their parents from the supper-table, the young people resumed the conversation.

"Hilda," said Abigail, "you are more in papa's secrets than any one of us; cannot you tell us why we are to be so mighty civil to these Stubbses, who are people so different to any the Comptaynes have been accustomed to associate with? I asked the question myself, but got nothing but black looks for my trouble."

"Now, you do not suppose, if I am, as you say, in the governor's secrets, that I am going to let them out to a parcel of chatterboxes like you! Why, you would tell Mrs. Burchell before you slept this very night, and it would be all over the county by this time to-morrow. No! leave me alone for telling secrets to girls," answered the Captain, yawning.

"You need not look so mysterious, Hilda, for I am sure you do not know; if you did, you would not have looked so cross when papa introduced you to Miss Stubbs," retorted Judith.

"Enough to make any one look cross to be made to dance with a humpbacked Manchester smut," replied the captain, surveying himself with

much complacency in the mirror which hung over the chimney-piece.

"I suppose you were thinking of 'Beauty and the Beast' all the time," laughed Judith.

"Oh, Judith! she is not so ugly as all that," exclaimed Beatrix. "I was talking to her for some time, and she was so pleasant that I forgot all about her figure; and she is not humpbacked, only a little crooked. Lady Harriet says it must have been from an accident in her childhood."

"How could you enter into conversation with such a person!" exclaimed Abigail, angrily. "It was all very well for Papa and Hilda to talk to them if they liked—for men may talk or dance with anyone, and it does not make much difference; but for the ladies of the family to put themselves unnecessarily forward with those sort of people will never do. I wonder you were not ashamed of yourself. She was introduced to me, but *I* took care to be looking the other way. I must have a serious conversation with mamma to-morrow, for it will be destruction to our characters if we are to be mixed up with such low creatures. There was 'Manchester' written in every fold of that vulgar white satin."

"What an oration!" drawled out the Captain. "Now, I advise you, girls, if you want us to have any peace in the house, not to meddle with what does not concern you; just do as you are bid, and do not bother. Now, be off to bed, and dream that I am married to Miss Stubbs if you like, and that you all attended the wedding dressed out in sour grapes. There; *good night*."

And, half-crossly, half-jokingly, he pushed the three girls before him up stairs.

We hope that the reader is not beginning to get sleepy, for we must trouble him to accompany us to another house, even to Moseley Park; where, assembled round a cosy supper-table, in a cheerful parlour, were seated Sir Arthur Beauchamp and his family.

In this age of similes and illustrations, it will be expected of us that we should take some trouble with our descriptions; simple statement of bare facts will not do in these poetical (?) days. White must be compared to the "riven snow," and black to the "raven's wing," &c. &c. &c. On this principle we will proceed to say that the owner and chief of the house was Sir Arthur Beauchamp, Baronet—a man tall as a two-yard measure (being



exactly six feet in his pumps), straight as an arrow, with hair white as swansdown, and cheeks ruddy as a Ribstone pippin; he was sixty-eight years old, and bore his age well. His was a hearty, honest face, and his eyes beamed over with fun and good humour. He was a good specimen of a "fine old English gentleman," but not of "the olden time," for he neither drank, swore, nor rode his horses to death. In manners he was courtly, and treated the ladies of his home circle with as much politeness as those in the outer world.

Lady Harriet Beauchamp was, in personal appearance and dignity of manner, much like our most gracious sovereign, Queen Victoria; but her eyes sparkled with more merriment than we ever saw emanate from the orbs of the Royal lady. Her ruby velvet dress and valuable diamond tiara set off Lady Harriet to advantage. Her husband and daughters were proud of her.

The family consisted of only four daughters, Agnes, Edith, Dora, and Marian; there was no son to inherit the title and estate. Major Beauchamp, the son of the Rev. Henry Beauchamp, a younger brother to Sir Arthur, was the heir

presumptive to the former; but the property was entirely at the disposal of the present possessor.

These young ladies were all beauties in their way, and merit some little attention. The eldest and third bore a remarkable likeness to each other, but none to their mother. They were above the middle height, with fine figures. Their hair, which hung in massive plaits round their faces, was black as (now spare us any more allusion to "raven's wing," we had it just above, pray, Mr. Editor)—well then, their hair was dark as Warren's blacking, and bore as beautiful a gloss as that far-famed composition is notorious for giving to our understandings. Their skin was fair, but not blonde, and the wreaths of scarlet geraniums which rested on their brows were most especially becoming.

Edith and Marian were in a totally different style—not quite so much alike as the other two. Their beauty was of the wax-doll type, though not wanting in variety of expression. Edith's eyes were hazel, Marian's grey; but their hair was the most remarkable thing about them; it was luxuriant, and fell in long curls on their snowy shoulders. The colour was not the light "Saxon



hue" that the Misses Comptayne boasted of, but a light brown, that looked as if a ray of the setting sun was lingering, loth to depart, in each curl. Think not that it approached a "questionable brown," or was of that vegetable tinge which the owners thereof so universally misname auburn. Two strings of pearls adorned (if we may so misuse a term as to apply it where no adornment could be necessary) each fair girl. The one bound her hair, the other encircled her throat.

Though we trust every one will, from our graphic description, be ready to pronounce all the four Misses Beauchamp decided beauties, yet it is not upon their outward, their personal loveliness, we would dwell the most. They had beautiful minds. Not that they were *blue* or particularly gifted—we dare say they could neither write a moral essay nor solve a problem; but they were well educated, accomplished, and never under the necessity of killing time. Their tempers were so sweet, their dispositions so sunny, their thoughts so pure and fresh, and (pardon us for using the expression to a young lady) so frisky. They delighted in merriments of all sorts, and could not bear to see any one unhappy; thoroughly enjoy-

ing life themselves, they could hardly understand anyone, having the use of all their limbs and faculties, not doing so in an equal degree. They were a sunshiny family, and one with which nobody could associate without feeling the better for contact with pure, unselfish nature. They were a problem to the Comptaynes, and the Comptaynes were equally so to them.

Major Beauchamp is the next of the party who falls under our notice. He was a fine, manly English soldier, and, on this occasion, appeared in full uniform, which he became, being tall, broad shouldered, well built, and sensible looking. He had seen some service, and his breast was decorated by three medals with various clasps. Added to all his usefulness when in action, he was a capital regimental officer, and a firm disciplinarian. This gave an air of decision to his good-humoured countenance, on which was also marked strong self-confidence (not conceit, which is as different in value and looks, to a close observer, as a gilt farthing to a golden guinea). It was a pet scheme, one cherished in Sir Arthur's own breast, that this stalwart nephew and the handsome Agnes should eventually fall in love with each other. In

the event of that desirable state of things happening, the Baronet would make an eldest son of his daughter, and, by that means, the title and estate would not be separated. But, with all due deference to the sagacity of the papa, we did not opine that things looked at all promising. The young people seemed a great deal too comfortable in each other's society for the mischief-making god to be anywhere within hail. What came to pass we can't say, of course ; the course of this history must develop itself.

There were two other "sons of Mars," as it is the newspaper custom to designate those bulwarks of the British nation ; but we really have not much to say of them beyond their names, Captain Annesley and Lieutenant Vere, both of Harry Beauchamp's regiment ; for, having been safe in the depot during the clash of arms, they had no decorations to display. One was dark, the other light ; one was tall, the other short ; one was thin, the other stout ; one had a small stammer, the other a slight lisp ; one had an idea of making up to a fair Miss Beauchamp, the other fancied himself sure of getting a dark one. Both agreed in having very little money, no expectations, but

an uncommonly good opinion of himself, and faith in his own talents as "lady-killer." They had nothing worse about them than empty-headedness, or else they would not have been guests at Moseley Park.

This was, then, the merry party who had made up their minds to have a good talk before they separated for the night; but the oysters, pigeon pie, &c., courted their prior attention, and Sir Arthur was the first to break silence.

"Well, young people, how have you enjoyed yourselves?"

"Very much indeed—a capital dance!" exclaimed one and all.

"How do you like Miss Stubbs?"

"Oh, poor thing!" said the youngest girl, "I am so sorry for her."

"Sorry for her, Marian?" repeated her father; "sorry for an heiress of some hundreds of thousands?"

"Oh, papa, I mean I am so sorry for her deformity. It must be so miserable to be so ugly."

"Ho, ho! missey, are you very unhappy?"

"No, papa dear, I am as happy as the day is long; but then—" Marian stopped suddenly at the

admission she was making, and blushed deeply ; however, quickly recovering, she joined heartily in the laugh raised against herself.

"That is the coolest thing I have heard for some time in a young lady," said the Baronet, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "You seem to have a tolerably good opinion of your own personal attractions, missey."

"Why, papa," retorted the merry girl, "anybody that is not blind may see that I have got two eyes."

"Well, we will all grant you that, and a good tongue into the bargain, if that will satisfy you. But now let us really set to work and pick these new comers to pieces in thorough earnest."

"I thought, papa, that you never approved of our picking people to pieces," said Dora, slyly.

"Do not I? Well, perhaps I do not. But, indeed, you must allow me to say that I think Miss Stubbs has very good manners, and looks very intelligent, and that Mr. Stubbs appears an honest, straightforward Englishman."

"*Man* — yes," stammered Captain Annesley ; "you cannot say *gentleman*."

"I did not say gentleman," returned the

Baronet, intentionally ignoring the fact that the officer used the word cannot—"I did not say gentleman, because, truth to speak, I do not exactly know what the epithet gentleman means in the present day. It seems to me every chimney-sweeper styles himself a gentleman (of the black robe, I suppose), and expects to be addressed 'Esquire.'"

"No; worse than that, uncle," exclaimed Harry, laughing. "When I went to the Quarter Sessions with you last week I had not been half an hour on the bench before I discovered that the dozen rusty, rather unwashed-looking individuals crammed together in a pew were '*gentlemen* of the jury,' assembled for the purpose of trying what a '*mercantile gentleman*' prosecuted and a '*legal gentleman*' defended—namely, the '*light-fingered gentleman*' in the dock; while a couple of '*medical gentlemen*,' or apothecary's apprentices, appeared as witnesses, and a '*gentleman* connected with the press' reported all the proceedings. Indeed, you need not laugh, girls, it is perfectly true. I picked up my information from the summing-up."

"Yes," said his uncle, who, like the rest, could hardly speak for laughing, "you are quite right.

The good old word gentleman is become almost a slang phrase now, and one I should not care to apply to anybody, particularly to a friend."

"A friend!" lisped Mr. Vere: "you can scarcely call a Mr. Stubbs of Manchester, a cotton-spinner, friend."

"A friend, perhaps not, for it is an early stage in our acquaintance to talk of friendship; besides that, friendship is not a one-sided affair, and Mr. Stubbs may not like me as much as I like him," replied Sir Arthur, purposely overlooking the snobbish part of the officer's remark.

"But what puzzles me," resumed Harry Beauchamp, "is the extreme attention, the even obsequious civility of Sir Hildebrande and his son to our new neighbours. I should have thought, according to their notions, anything so low and vulgar, so smelling of smoke (imitating Abigail Comptayne's manner), would have polluted the very atmosphere. What a burning of pastiles there must be at the Grange to-night!"

"I agree with you, Harry," said his uncle: "it is a wonderful change, and one which I cannot comprehend."

"Perhaps," chimed in Captain Annesley, with

the air of a man who has made an important discovery—"perhaps Comptayne has an eye to the heiress."

"Oh! oh! oh!" was the exclamation of all the young people.

"You little know the Comptaynes if you think they would do anything half as sensible," remarked Lady Harriet Beauchamp.

"Upon my word, my love," resumed her husband, musing, "I am much inclined to think Annesley is in the right, for I am sure that the family must be very much in want of money. They have mortgaged everything they have got to mortgage, and yesterday, on riding through Springwood, I saw the splendid old oak avenue marked for 'a fall.' That looks bad. What a sad sight it is to see a family going to rack and ruin for want of a little common sense. Not that I advocate marrying for money alone; but if people mix with their fellow-creatures, many a happy match may be made by each party bringing a little grist to the mill, and no one ever thinks of styling it a mercenary affair. The family would thus live respectably and comfortably without the *éclat* of a crisis, in which either the

pride or the oaks must be sacrificed, as in this case."

"Mr. Stubbs did not appear particularly flattered by the Comptayne condescension," remarked Agnes. "Miss Stubbs seemed to treat Captain Comptayne mighty coolly."

"Oh, Mr. Stubbs knows a plated spoon from a silver one," was her father's quiet reply.

"What a fall for the autocrat," said Lady Harriet.

"The *haughtycrat*, I suppose you mean, my love," replied Sir Arthur, who could never allow an opportunity for a pun to escape him.

A general groan marked both appreciation and disapprobation from the young ones.

"But now, really," said the punster more seriously, "I never was more surprised in my life than when Sir Hildebrande proposed, at the last county committee meeting, that Mr. Stubbs should be admitted to the assemblies, and consequently into the county society. Almost all exclaimed against it; whereupon Sir Hildebrande waxed wrath, and seemed to consider the refusal to admit *his* tenant as a personal insult. From the speech he made on the occasion, you would have thought

that the worthy Baronet was going to stand for Manchester on the Chartist interest; and when he called upon me to second him, I *was* astonished. I had till then remained quiet, as I considered my opinion of the extreme exclusiveness of the assemblies to be very well known; I only remarked, when personally appealed to, that 'I was no friend to exclusiveness, but that I could not understand why, if Mr. Stubbs was admitted, several others had been so summarily rejected at the last meeting.' The fiery gentleman demanded a ballot, and, contrary to my expectation, gained his cause."

"But do you really mean to say, Sir Arthur," inquired Mr. Vere, "that you approve of the way in which the Manchester smuts are trying to force their way into all the best society?"

"Upon my word, I do not see why the men who made their money are not as good society as the descendants of men who stole theirs. For we fine folks, who boast that we came over with the Conqueror, the Prince of Orange, or what not, must have come by our estates rather unfairly, I opine. But, joking apart, the manufacturers and merchants hold the wealth and prosperity of England in their hands; and if we landed gentry

do not extend the hand of fellowship to them, they will form a body against us, and before many years are rolled over they will have turned us out. By refusing to be friends, we make enemies of a large and influential party, who will get all the mortgages and encumbered estates into their hands, and will retaliate on us for our pride. They are giving their sons and their daughters the best of educations. They are quite aware of their want of polish in manner, and wish to improve themselves. They are anxious to take a place in 'society,' as it is called."

"But surely it is the duty of the aristocracy to keep down these fungi," lisped Vere.

"Now, Vere, I do not think that the epithet fungi should be applied to men who have raised themselves to wealth by honest steady industry. It seems to me that the fungi are the speculators, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow."

"I quite agree with you, Harry," said his uncle; "that is a very proper distinction between the honest working man and the speculator or gambler."

"But, Sir Arthur," persisted Mr. Vere, "they are such an unmannerly set, these manufacturers.

You know the saying, 'It takes two generations to make a gentleman.'"

"Well, my dear sir," returned the Baronet, "so it does to make a baronet or to make a lord" (that latter word was slightly emphasised with a roguish twinkle in his eye for Lady Harriet's especial benefit, for Mr. Vere's father had just been created Lord Ptarmigan, and Mr. Vere was much inclined to plume himself on his new dignity of peer's son, and to make the most of the Honourable he was now entitled to prefix to his name). "Every transition state is more or less a trial, and how it is passed depends mainly upon the character of the person tried. Some minds, also, bear a change better than others; but, at the best, it must take a little time for a person to feel quite easy in a new position. The land-lubber who follows Jack Tar up the rigging is astonished at the cool way in which, when they reach the masthead, the sailor looks around him and uses the telescope, while he, poor man, is totally absorbed in anxiety to maintain his footing, and not disgrace himself by betraying fear. I am inclined to think that the fault which causes the new man to be ridiculous is not so much his own,

for he has generally something else to engage his attention, as that of his wife and family, who being idle, have time to be foolish. I am sure you, young men, must remember the time when the round jacket was exchanged for the tail-coat; how conscious you felt,—how stiffly you walked,—and how long it took before you gave up thinking that every one was looking at you.”

“I did not think,” observed Lady Harriet, “that Mr. Stubbs looked at all ill at ease.”

“Mr. Stubbs, if I am not mistaken, my dear,” replied her husband, “is a man of strong, good sense, a man who knows the value of most things, social position included. Besides, I did not intend to infer that *all* rising men must be stiff; but all those who think as much of their new dignities as a schoolboy does of his coat-tails, of course, will feel awkward in the same proportion. The men of trade now wish to take that place in society to which their money and talents entitle them; and let us beware how we refuse them.”

The officers looked at each other somewhat amazed at these sentiments from the mouth of one whom they had always considered a specimen

of the "genuine article"—the English aristocracy to wit. The Major enjoyed their puzzled faces, and laughingly exclaimed,—

"Now, my dear fellows, do take the advice of your superior officer for once, and enter the lists for the heiress. Proclaim yourselves ready to do battle against Captain Comptayne or anyone else. Why should he be allowed to have possession undisputed of the field? There is plenty of armour in the hall; you have only to take your choice of device. I shall take a rat in a trap for crest, and the motto 'Nil Desperandum.'"

"Nay, Harry, leave that motto for Vere," said his uncle.

"Why so, sir? Does he look as if he wanted encouragement?"

"Not exactly that; but you see it would translate *Persivere*, and save the herald the trouble of announcing him."

"Percy-Vere! Well, I would not stand that if I were you, Percy."

The hisses and groans were so noisy and prolonged that the merry old man was fain to put his hands on his ears, and rush out of the room. Lady Harriet, as soon as she could either speak or

make herself heard, peremptorily pronounced supper to be finished, and desired the whole party would depart to their own rooms.

* * * * *

Mr. Stubbs merely asked his niece how she had enjoyed herself.

"Very much indeed, uncle. But, oh, that horrid man!"

"You recognised him, did you, Sally?"

"Yes, immediately. But, uncle, I am so sleepy! Good night."

CHAPTER X.

"Minutely trace man's life ; year after year,
Through all his days, let all his deeds appear,
And then, though some may in that life be strange,
Yet there appears no vast nor sudden change ;
The links that bind those various deeds are seen,
And no mysterious void is left between."

CRABBE.

LADIES and gentlemen, unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, my friend, Mr. Editor, has placed me in a very unpleasant situation,—or rather, if I would speak plain truth, I fear I ought to confess that my own vanity is the cause of the dilemma in which I find myself ; for I was conceited old goose enough to allow him to persuade me, in honied words, that "*I* could tell my own tale so much better than *he* could ;" and that "my story was perfectly essential to the progress of his narrative." In short, he got quite the blind side of me, and convinced me in a weak moment that I could not be done without. Now, as I always keep a promise, however rashly made, when the doing so only involves my own inconvenience, you see

me before you, ready to "say my little say," and to crave your indulgence for an illiterate "Manchester man," whom force of circumstances has pushed so forward on this stage, and who is become an orator *malgré lui*.

Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, to business. My friend wishes me to inform you in what manner I became interested in the affairs of Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, Baronet, and how it is that I, a low vulgar "man of cotton," am so courted and made much of by that most exclusive "man of pedigree." In order to make you fully understand me and my motives, it will be necessary to go back a few years, and show how I rose from the penniless orphan of a street-sweeper in Lancaster, to my present position and wealth. Though I trust I am humbly grateful to the merciful Providence who watched over me, protected me, and placed me in the favourable circumstances through which I have passed, yet I may say, without vain boasting, that to none of my fellow-creatures am I *indebted* for one single farthing. I always honestly gave an equivalent for the wages I received, and no *charity* money ever entered my pocket. I ever tried to act fairly to my employers; and when I became a

master myself, bore out the principle in relation to my servants, and ever insisted on the same from them.

In my youth I carried my health and strength to the fairest market, and in my mature age my bales of cotton followed the same example. I have been no gambler, I have made no money in random speculations or bubble schemes, and laying my hand on my heart, and thanking my God for the same, I can honestly say I never took an unfair advantage of ignorance or necessity. The Almighty blessed my increase, and I earnestly hope He will so enable me to spend the wealth entrusted to my care, that it may not tie me down to earth; but by promoting the happiness of some of my fellow-creatures, I may raise a monument of gratitude to the "Bountiful Giver of all good things."

Of my grandfather or grandmother on either side I know nothing. My father was

"The noblest work of God—an honest man!"

and what is it possible for a person to want more in the way of pedigree? My mother was my father's fitting mate. Is not that enough to satisfy any rational being?

In early life my father was a soldier. He lost

his leg in action, and was, in consequence, discharged with a pension ; but not relishing a life of idleness, he took to sweeping a crossing in the streets of Lancaster, and so earned a trifle each day. One unlucky morning he received a mortal injury through the carelessness of a coachman, and was obliged to be taken to the infirmary in Manchester, where he lingered some months and then died, leaving my mother with two children, and only her own labour to look to for their support. The poor-laws were not then what they are now ; neither was there as much of what is called charity going on then ; but I doubt, if there had been, that my mother would have accepted it, for she was of an independent spirit, and while she could work would be beholden to no one. From her I inherit the self-reliance and determination which have carried me through many a hard battle with circumstances which would have puzzled many a less determined man. My father's favourite motto, and one which my mother loved to remind me of, was, "Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well ;" and the corresponding exhortation of Solomon, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," was early impressed upon

our minds. I have heard many old people in Lancaster, who remembered my father well, remark, that "they never knew a man practise his own precept better, for, among many other excellent qualities, he was the best street-sweeper in the town."

After my father's death, one of the house-surgeons of the hospital, who had taken a fancy to my mother's respectable appearance, obtained her some occupation in washing and charring; but, work as hard as she could, she obtained for us the bare means of subsistence. In about a year my little sister, who had been a cripple from her birth and sadly delicate, sickened from the effects of the close city air, and soon afterwards died. My mother and I were then left alone in the world.

Well do I remember, on the evening of poor little Polly's funeral, when we two were in bed together—we had no money to provide either food or firing that night, and had crept into bed for the sake of the warmth—I nestled up close to my mother, who was weeping bitterly, and bade her not to cry any more, for that I would work hard—Oh, so hard!—and that I would make her a lady, and she should wear a satin gown, and ride

in a carriage. I kept my word. The promise made in the impulse of boyish affection became to me what my friend, the Editor, calls "my fixed idea." I kept it ever before me as my grand motive. I determined in my childish heart that I would do it (I prayed God to help me!), and in my manhood I did do it.

When my mother had gone to her work the next morning, I, having no longer my poor little sister to amuse, slipped out of the way of the neighbour in whose charge I was left, but who never took any further notice of me than merely giving me the food set apart for my dinner. I ran off to the hospital as fast as I could, thinking that, as I had often been there to see my father, some one might recognise me and give me some work, which was my grand object. I entered the porter's lodge, and accosting that functionary somewhat abruptly, though civilly, said, "Please, sir, I want something to do." He did not at first take any particular notice of me, only bidding me get out of the way; presently, however, finding me still at the entrance, he looked closer at me, recollected my face, and more kindly asked me what I wanted. I told my story. He shook his head and answered,—



"Why, you are such a little chap, you could not do anything; you had better go home to your mammy. Here is sixpence for you."

That was not what I wanted; and, to his great astonishment, I put my hands behind my back, and refused to take the money, saying,—

"No, thank you, sir, I do not want *charity*—I want *work*."

I had heard my mother use those words to the clergyman of the parish when he offered her some assistance; and she had afterwards explained to me that it was wicked and beggarly to take people's money and give them nothing in return for it. I was so impressed with this idea, and had such a horror of being a beggar, that I never could be induced to take money to which I did not conscientiously feel that I was entitled.

Just as I had declined the offer of the worthy porter, and repeated that I was seven years old on Sunday, and that I was sure I could work if somebody would try me, several more of the officials came in from their breakfasts, and to them was related the wonderful (as he seemed to think it then, and as I, knowing more of the world, do now) case of a boy evidently in distress refusing a present of sixpence. The men looked at me with

astonishment, and some made jokes at my expense, which I not relishing, but in my shyness not knowing how to avoid, was beginning to cry, when one of the young house-surgeons came down stairs, hastily, calling out,—

“Edwards, can you get me a messenger to take this note to Dr. C.? He is wanted immediately, for I cannot leave the case to go and report to him. The man in No. 5 ward is taken with another fit.”

Here was a chance for me; and I half put out my hand to take the note, but drew it back, shocked at my own presumption, and contented myself with eyeing it wistfully. My friend, the porter, noticed my eagerness, and called out,—

“Here’s a little chap that has been asking for work. I wonder whether he knows the way to Ardwick. Do you, my man?”

“Yes, sir,” said I, eagerly; “my mother often goes out that way with clothes she has washed, and sometimes takes me with her.”

“Can I trust you to take this note to the large red brick house, nearest to the church?”

“Yes, indeed, sir, and thank you; I will run all the way.”



"Now, Edwards, don't send that little dirty beggar; he will drop the note, and it will never get there at all," exclaimed the young gentleman.

"I am not a beggar, sir, and I will not drop the letter," I retorted, rather angrily I fear, for I would as soon have been called a thief as a beggar.

"No, Mr. Simpson, the lad is no beggar, that I can answer for; he has just refused sixpence because he had done nothing to earn it. May I send him, sir? I am sure he will do his best," urged Mr. Edwards.

"Oh, if you like; send the devil if you like, so as he is quick; but, mind, if Dr. C. is not here in time, the blame will all lie on your shoulders," replied the youth, somewhat sulkily, for he did not much like Edwards's partisanship of me; and he walked up stairs again, whistling a tune.

"Now, my man," said the goodnatured porter, "do you really think that you could deliver the note in three quarters of an hour?"

On my saying "I thought I could," he resumed,—

"You must ring at the door bell of the large red house, and say that you are to wait for an answer; and then, as soon as you have got it, you must

come back here as fast as you can, and I will pay you your wages."

So saying, he opened the door and let me out. I trotted away as fast as my little legs could carry me, and, as I knew the road perfectly, I met with no interruptions. I did my errand, and returned with a verbal message, that "Dr. C. would be at the hospital in an hour," sooner than my friend expected me. He was just going to dinner, and made me sit down with him, saying, "No one ever refuses an invitation to dinner," and gave me the best meal of bacon and greens that I had ever tasted. Then, paying me my sixpence, he desired me to come again the next morning, and he would see what could be done for me.

You may imagine my delight and my mother's surprise when, on her return, I related my adventures and gave her the sixpence.

I went back to my friend Edwards the next day, and found he had not been idle in my behalf: he had procured for me the situation of errand-boy to one of the few warehouses then existing in Manchester. In the highest spirits, and with many grateful thanks to my benefactor, I went to my place. The business into which I that day entered

in the lowest capacity is now my own; it is three times the size it was then, and has been, thank God, fairly earned.

I continued to live at home with my mother, who, though she could neither read nor write, gave me the best of educations—an education, without which all the learning in the world will not insure a man happiness, either in this life or hereafter. She instilled into my heart a thorough knowledge of my duty to God and man,—she brought me up with the strictest principles of honesty in detail,—she taught me not to rob my master of his time any more than of his money,—and impressed this former point upon my mind most thoroughly in the following manner:—

It was the custom of this watchful parent, every night, to require from me an exact account of the manner in which I had earned my daily wages. And one evening finding, from my own admission, that I had yielded to the temptation of standing to listen to an organ and look at a monkey, when I should have been carrying a letter for my master, she insisted on my accompanying her and returning my sixpence to my employer; which she entreated him to take as the punishment of my

dishonesty. This I never forgot, and the offence was never repeated. My mother did not blame me for listening to the music; she simply insisted that I had not earned my day's wages, and therefore it was not honest to take them.

I believe that it is to my character for fair dealing that I owe my success in life, more than to anything else.

In twenty years from that date my respected mother rode in as handsome a carriage, and behind as good a pair of greys, as ever were seen in Manchester. She had as comfortable a house and as rich a brocaded silk as money could buy. For the last twenty-five years of her life she had every want supplied.

Respecting my education I shall say but little. I got it as I found I wanted it. To nothing does the old adage, "When there's a will there's a way," better apply than to learning. And as many a similar case to mine may be found in Dr. Smiles' excellent work called "Self Help," to that interesting volume I beg to refer you all, both ladies and gentlemen.

On the death of my mother I was a lonely man. Why? young ladies may inquire; but I shall not

satisfy their curiosity, however innocent and laudable it may be. Suffice it, I was lonely; my fixed idea was gone, buried in my mother's grave. She whom I had worked for was at rest. I had kept the promise of my youth. Another "fixed idea" soon took possession of my mind, not my heart; for I humbly trust that I never tied my heart down to earthly things; but my mind, my imagination, my industrious habits took for their aim the prosperity of my house. I determined to raise my firm to the head of its branch of the trade; and one fine summer morning I found I had *done* it. I had attained the summit of my ambition—I saw the firm of Stubbs and Company cited in the papers of the day as "the first in the world."

I was, I cannot say elated, for that would imply that my success was somewhat the result of accident, but I was satisfied. Yes, that good old English word satisfied fully explains my state of feeling. To be satisfied is surely the height of human happiness. I was happy; I had attained to my pre-eminence by sheer merit, by sheer hard work. My house deserved the position I had gained for it, as it owed it to good honest plodding means, not to gambling speculation; it was built upon steady

foundations, foundations which would unflinchingly endure the shock of any commercial crisis, however severe. I repeat, I had realised my second "fixed idea," and I was satisfied.

* * * * *

While our kind friend Mr. Stubbs pauses for a moment or two for breath, we may be pardoned for interposing a remark of our own regarding the completeness of the last sentence. What word in the whole English language could have conveyed to our idea the state of his mind more emphatically than that expressive one—satisfied? "I was satisfied," says he. Any *sequitur* to that would be unnecessary, in fact would spoil the sentence.

What a fine old English word it is! On turning to "Johnson's Dictionary," we confess to our disappointment on finding that the celebrated lexicographer gives it both a French and a Latin derivative. We should have unhesitatingly pronounced it pure Saxon. We do not think old Samuel particularly happy in his choice of illustrations for this noble word, and his explanations are poor. The word satisfy has, in truth, no real synonyme. Content will not do—it savours too much of resignation; repletion sounds gluttonish; nothing but the word

satisfied really conveys to our mind the idea of being satisfied. The translators of the Psalms felt its full force, and entered into the spirit of the word; for in both the Prayer-book and Bible version David says, "When I wake up after thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." A more apt and beautiful illustration of the word cannot be.

To be satisfied, appears to us the perfection of human happiness. There is a faith and a repose in the idea most grateful and soothing to the restless soul, troubled about many things. Happy, truly happy, that man who can say with feeling—
I am satisfied.

CHAPTER XI.

"All this and more he purposed,
And what man could do he did to realise his plan."
CRABBE.

MY "fixed idea" was again realised, and, in the proud consciousness of this, I suppose that I must have walked faster than usual, for I heated myself very much, and, in consequence, entered a confectioner's shop, where I sat down to rest and called for some luncheon.

I trust, ladies and gentlemen, that I am not wearying you with this long exordium concerning myself; but it was necessary that you should understand the working principles that had moved me on, or you would not be able to comprehend the motives which are actuating me now, or rather which have been the mainsprings of my conduct towards Sir Hildebrande Comptayne and family. Allow me now to introduce myself as—

The stout "old party" in the confectioner's shop mentioned in the opening chapter of this book.

What both of us saw and heard has been most ably narrated by my friend the Editor ; but what passed through my mind on that occasion, and what new “fixed idea” then took possession of my heart, you have still to learn.

I was not at first listening to the young gentlemen’s conversation ; I was enjoying my own private satisfaction, and in rather a brown study thereupon, until roused by the exclamation,—

“ Did you ever see so disgusting an object ! ”

I looked up hastily and saw the wretched little creature at the window. The likeness flashed upon me instantly—the likeness, I mean, to my poor little deformed sister who had died in childhood, and who might have stood at the window and looked in with the same wistful eye fifty years ago. From that moment I was that child’s friend ; my heart yearned towards her ; I determined to protect her, to assist her ; but I was so shocked by the apparition that it was some minutes ere I could move, and young Beauchamp was beforehand with me. On recovering myself I went to the door and saw the child creeping away with the good things the young soldier had given her. I beckoned to a policeman and requested him to

follow her home, find out all about her, and report to me in the evening. I returned to the shop. You already know what passed there between me and the youngsters. I took their cards with very different motives, as the sequel to this story will show you. The three scoffers I determined to punish by means of the girl herself, if she lived to enable me to do so. My plan has partly succeeded, but my cup of vengeance is not yet full. As for the gallant Beauchamp, I trust my gratitude will, at a future day, assure him of my warm admiration. I have done with none of the party yet.

But to return to the child. In due time my policeman returned with a sad, but I fear, in a large manufacturing town, not an uncommon tale. He had followed the girl to a miserable cellar, and there found her feeding another still more emaciated being with Beauchamp's fruit. It was a young woman, in the last stage of consumption, lying on a wretched flock mattress. The policeman's uniform frightened them, and he could obtain but little information from either girl. The neighbours knew scarcely anything of them. They represented them as being in the deepest poverty ;

but, as far as they knew, were perfectly respectable. They had not been in the cellar many weeks; they appeared to have no friends; no one came to see them; but by their language and manners they seemed to be something above the common.

I straightway determined to go and see them myself, and put on my hat for the purpose of instantly accompanying the policeman, but second thoughts made me take it off again, and ring the bell for my housekeeper; for I reflected that she was the proper person to go the errand. What good could I do among a parcel of women? I should only frighten them, without being of the slightest service. I therefore obliged my impatience to give way to my discretion, and requested my trusty servant to accompany the policeman, giving her minute instructions to take with her all that she deemed necessary, full power to act as she might see fit, and orders to bring the poor creatures back with her by all means if she could. I had full confidence in Mrs. Newman's sense and goodness, for she had known bad days herself, and had a feeling heart for any one in distress.

Seeing the phlegmatic old gentleman before
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you, you will have some difficulty in imagining the state of excitement into which I worked myself during my housekeeper's absence. Throughout those two hours the scenes of my childhood rose up. Every incident connected with my little sister passed in review before me. I recalled the hours which I had spent in amusing her and soothing her when in pain, the choking grief with which I accompanied my mother to her funeral—that funeral, to pay for which my mother's much-prized wedding gown and shawl were sold—the desolate coming home after we had seen the last of her, and left her, by my father's side, in that dismal city burying-ground,—all came back to my memory with the distinctness of yesterday. I vowed I would befriend this little forlorn cripple for my lost darling's sake. I could not sit still. I busied myself in arranging for her reception, for I felt sure she would come. I collected on my tea-table every nice thing I could think of as likely to tempt the appetite of a child. In my anxiety I sent out for cakes innumerable, and fruits in profusion, till my preparations were enough for a dozen visitors.

Meanwhile the "idea" which had entered my

mind was fast becoming "fixed" in my heart; and before my guests arrived I had sketched, with my mind's eye, my plan, pretty nearly as I afterwards was enabled to carry it out.

Mrs. Newman returned at last, and with her the distressed pair. The invalid was immediately carried up stairs, and placed in the housekeeper's own bed; while I, who met them in the hall, vainly endeavoured to induce the little one to come with me and enjoy the good things I had collected for her supper. She decidedly refused to do aught but follow her auntie; and, though seriously disappointed at the loss of her company for the evening, I could not but respect the feeling which occasioned it. The emaciated little thing was speedily whipped up, and carried off by a sturdy housemaid, and I saw no more of her that night.

Mrs. Newman was too much occupied with her charges, one of whom, she said, was dying of starvation and the other of decline, to enter into any particulars; and it was not until the next morning that she told me the story in detail.

I passed a sleepless night, and rose early to make inquiries for my visitors; so had an account

was given me of the elder one, that I instantly sent for good medical advice. The child was sleeping soundly, and I was permitted to look at her. The impression of her likeness to my sister was renewed, and my interest in her redoubled. I longed to discover whether any one had a legal right to interfere between me and her,—whether there was any impediment to my keeping her for my very own. When she was brought downstairs to me she looked very different to what she had done the previous day; but you must not imagine that, when the maid had washed her, and dressed her in some clean clothes which were borrowed from a neighbour, that the forlorn little elf proved a beauty. No; far from it. She was still a pitiable object. She was one mass of discoloured bruises and deformed bones. Thin to emaciation, she looked scarcely human. All this made her likeness to my sister more striking. I discovered, in the course of the day, that she was an orphan, and had met with a very serious accident in a factory. Since her mother's death she had lived with a maiden aunt who kept her in comparative comfort; but her kind relative, being laid low by illness, could no longer work, and

they were doomed to drag on a miserable existence in the extreme of poverty ; having nothing to supply their daily wants, except a few relics of better days, which were just exhausted when I had the good fortune to meet with them.

The aunt lingered but a few days, being too far gone when she came to my house for any human aid to avail ; and little Sally was left to me for my very own. I provided a nursery governess for her, to teach her by degrees, under the superintendence of Mrs. Newman. I formally adopted the child, and acknowledged her at once as my heiress. I cared not for those who laughed at my "prodigy," as they called her ; but they never laughed twice. I exacted for her the same respect and attention as if she were really the niece that I called her ; and, being a *rich man*, I generally got my own way. The most eminent surgeons were consulted as to her bodily defects ; for being the result of accident, and not constitutional, I thought they might possibly be ameliorated. But, though the doctors restored her to perfect health, they could neither bring back sight to her eye, nor renovate the shrunken arm : that was chronic injury. Sally remained four years in Manchester ;

the time was varied by occasional excursions to the sea or mountain air in the summer. I then sent her to London, and placed her under the care of a lady, to whom I confided my intentions in her favour, requesting that she might be educated with a view to her moving in the high circle to which her fortune would eventually entitle her. Mrs. Lawson did her duty, and Sally is all I could wish. I am quite accustomed to her personal defects, and do not notice them; and have no doubt that, under Mrs. Davenport's judicious chaperonage, she will do honour to her training. So much, then, for Sally and the old gentleman. I trust I have not quite tired your patience; but you see you have put me on my hobby, and you must abide the consequences. Never, in my knowledge, though a hobby may kick, plunge, jib, or fairly run away with its rider, never did I hear of one that was shortwinded.

During the time that I was interesting myself in the education of my adopted niece, you must not suppose that I had lost sight of her champion, Mr. Beauchamp, or her persecutor, Mr. Compayne. No; I kept them in sight. My first piece of revenge on the latter has been in raising

the former over his head in the regiment. I, unknown to him, have lodged all the moneys necessary for his various steps; he is already major, and will be lieutenant-colonel as soon as regulation permits. He is ignorant who is helping him, but I fancy connects it in some mysterious manner with the scene in the confectioner's shop.

Captain Comptayne is certainly mortified by Major Beauchamp's rise over his head; but that is not the cream, if I may use the expression, of my revenge—not my “fixed idea.” I found out all about his family and himself. I learnt their pretension, their airs, their pride, their debts, and their folly. By employing a good man of business, I soon contrived to buy up all their mortgages and other liabilities; I became sole creditor. I now hold a mortgage on the estate of Comptayne Grange to its full value, besides the bills of various tradesmen. The last money transaction between Sir Hildebrande and myself was my lending him money sufficient to liquidate the debts of his second son, a worthless young scamp, on condition of his giving me a lease of “The Gorses,” and an introduction to “the County.”

He was obliged to consent ; he had no help for it. Here I am ; and this is the secret of my connection with the family of Comptayne. Be it understood, I am no usurious money-lender. I exact but an honest interest for my accommodation. Sir Hildebrande knows that he has a man of honour to deal with—one who will never take an unfair advantage of him ; and that he is far safer in my hands than in those of the Jews or money-lenders. The only point in which I act on the principle of revenge for his son's insult and cowardly behaviour towards little Sarah in her day of misery, and which I vowed should be paid for, is in insisting upon his introducing me to "the County ;" that done, he may act as he pleases ; but, if I understand human nature aright, he will not drop me in a hurry. I could have got into society as completely as I wished in other ways, but I was determined my introduction should be the act of the exclusive Comptayne family. My amusement in watching the baronet is great, for I know his motives, and can follow his train of thoughts, while I know what it costs him to be civil to a "Manchester man."

CHAPTER XII.

"I will marry her, sir, at your request."

MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.

WE hope that our readers are as much obliged as we have expressed ourselves, for the trouble Mr. Stubbs has taken to tell us his story. It has been done in so manly and straightforward a manner as to need no comments from us; and he has drawn his own character so well, that he has saved us a world of trouble, and prevented our readers from having to wade through page after page, which we might have thought it necessary to write about our hero and his "fixed idea." We will acknowledge at once that Mr. Stubbs is our hero. Did ever romance-writer start with a hero of his advanced age? Did ever romance-writer present, as a hero, a man whom he did not intend either to kill or to marry at the end of the last volume? We trow not. Nevertheless, in these days of improvement, we have ventured out of the beaten track, and we have done it. Behold our hero—Joshua Stubbs,

of Manchester, aged sixty-five, too old to be married, and who will be found alive at the end of the book.

Now that our readers have been admitted into the green room, and also allowed a sight of the springs, &c., which are the motive actions of our puppets, we trust they have not lost all interest in the tale, but are still anxious to know how Mr. Stubbs contrives to obtain the end he has in view, namely, his revenge upon Captain Comptayne; or rather, what will be the effect of his stage manœuvres, as seen from the boxes or pit.

Miss Stubbs has been personally described, and no doubt the reader is as much surprised as we intended he should be, on discovering that the young lady in pearls and satin was identical with the "disgusting object" in squalor and rags; but you see what money will do. Though some more steady-going folks may be astonished at the turn things are taking, yet we fear that we shall be in dire disgrace with the romantic young lady, who doubtless expected the ragged little child to be a princess in disguise, or to turn out the representative of all the Howards at least, stolen in her infancy by gipsies, and sold to a cotton-spinner.

But, alas! no such thing. We are bound to admit that no blood more aristocratic than that of a Manchester weaver flows in her veins, and that what she is now is what Mr. Stubbs' money has made from a bundle of rags, hunted out of a Manchester cellar.

Of personal attractions Miss Sally Stubbs had none, at first sight. Our heroine was far more forbidding to the casual observer than "the fright" of Miss Pickering, who really, after all, turns out a very presentable young lady. But all the good will on one side, or the skill of the doctors on the other, could not give Sally two eyes, the use of her left hand, or a straight spine. Mr. Stubbs was perfectly aware of her deficiencies in personal attractions, though he considered her perfection in everything else; however, in them he saw no hindrance to his scheme; they would be no drawback to the realisation of his "fixed idea." He was a man of business, he was a man of the world; he understood—who better?—the idiosyncrasy of the nineteenth century, and knew full well that a diamond star on the forehead would effectually prevent the loss of the eye from being noticed, while a necklace of pearls would conceal all spinal

deformity; and who, in the name of Cræsus, ever would think of looking at the shape of the left hand, if the right one contained a few hundreds of thousands? So argued Mr. Stubbs.

Mr. Stubbs always affirmed to his intimates, as his private opinion, that if the lady famed in history as having a black pudding at the end of her nose, had lived in these enlightened days, she would have seen the folly of insisting upon her husband's throwing away his third and last wish in relieving her from it. She would have joyfully acquiesced in his desire, and sat herself down quite contentedly with her nasal appendage encased in gold. He (Mr. Stubbs) was certain that, backed by a man-cook and house in Belgrave Square, a country seat and a pack of hounds, the worthy woman might have altogether dispensed with the covering, and the black pudding, *au naturel*, would have been pronounced by young and old as "the sweetest thing." She might even have set the fashion; and, had she done so, the ladies of the present day might be appearing in park or drawing-room with base imitations. Why not? Surely it would not look more absurd than patches, rouge, powder, hoops, heels, &c.

So argued our worthy friend, and upon his argument he acted.

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Numerous invitations were received, and many accepted, from far and near, by the family at "The Gorses;" but with Moseley Park the intercourse became frequent and sociable. Sir Arthur liked Mr. Stubbs, and Mr. Stubbs liked Sir Arthur. In Mrs. Davenport Lady Harriet had discovered an old acquaintance of her girlhood; though both ladies had lost sight of each other for so many years, that the recognition was not one of first sight. The girls got on famously with Sally; and even Marian, in their almost daily intercourse, at last forgot the deformity which so grieved her at first. Miss Stubbs was amiable and accomplished; she could do several things better than they could, and had a splendid voice: altogether, she was an acquisition to the family circle.

In vain did Sir Hildebrande try to get upon a similar footing. He could make no advance upon the ceremonious; all his polite speeches were lost—Mr. Stubbs never understood them; all his lady's condescension was thrown away—Mr. Stubbs took everything as a matter of course. Mr. Stubbs'

manners, as we have before remarked, were good, having not a shadow of vulgarity or snobbishness; but his behaviour to the two baronets was strikingly different. To Sir Hildebrande his manners were blunt, matter-of-fact, and just a *little* patronising; to Sir Arthur he was gay, lively, and becomingly deferential. As the former advanced to familiarity, Mr. Stubbs backed; but the friendly overtures of the latter were good-humouredly received. To Lady Comptayne's condescending civility, friend Joshua was distantly polite; while to Lady Harriet Beauchamp (who was too ladylike to condescend) his manner was as hearty as her ladyship's own, and he felt sincerely grateful to her for the kindness his little girl received at her house.

We remarked that Lady Harriet was "too ladylike to be condescending." Nothing to our mind savours more of the essence of *vulgarity* than the patronising airs of condescension which are assumed by some fine folks in their intercourse with those they deem their inferiors. Genuine good manners, of which the highly born ought to set the example, consists in setting people at their ease; condescending *manners* destroy all comfort,

and either make one feel exceedingly small or exceedingly angry. Real condescension—we hope our readers will agree with us, for who has not, at one time or other of his life, fallen under this annoyance?—real condescension, we repeat, is invisible and insensible; it charms unconsciously, making two persons pleased with each other who would, under different circumstances, part with amusement perhaps in one mind, but decidedly a feeling of insult rankling in the breast of the other.

“If she had not said so much I’d a thought she meant summat,” said a countryman of a lady who, having sheltered in his cottage from a shower of rain, *condescended* to admire, in unqualified terms, everything that met her eye, from the earthen floor to the smoky chimney. The man’s idea was correct: the fine lady overacted her part, and annoyed, instead of gratifying, her host. Genuine condescension is a combination of good nature and delicate tact, which dictate the when, where, and how to speak.

Lady Comptayne’s manner to Mr. Stubbs and his ladies would have annoyed them had they allowed themselves to dwell upon her ladyship’s

absurdities, while Lady Harriet's exquisite taste in everything she said or did charmed them beyond measure.

Having accepted much of the offered hospitality in the neighbourhood, Mr. Stubbs issued cards for a concert and ball on two consecutive days. A private concert was a novelty, and caused some excitement and curiosity. It originated in this way. Mr. Stubbs was very fond of music, and thought to give himself and his niece a treat by inviting her London singing-mistress to pay a week's visit at "The Gorses;" then hearing that some other celebrities were spending the Christmas vacation at no great distance, he contrived, by Madame Rubon's assistance, to get them to assemble at "The Gorses" for one night, he making it quite worth their while. Thinking it dog-in-the-mangerish to keep all these good things to himself, he invited his neighbours to join. Young people cannot live without dancing—at least so say the Misses Beauchamp; the concert must end with a ball; but Mr. Stubbs did not like crowding everything together in such unnecessary haste, therefore it was eventually settled that a two days' festivity was to take place. The house was filled

with guests from top to bottom, and very tasty preparations were made.

We hinted, a few chapters ago, that Mr. Stubbs made a somewhat ostentatious display of his wealth. He did not as a general thing, but occasionally, for Sir Hildebrande's benefit, he did give himself a few airs, and enjoyed a hearty laugh over them afterwards. He knew the Baronet would put up with a good deal from him, and for Sally's sake he delighted in teasing the house of Comptayne. In letting him "The Gorses," and introducing him to the county, Sir Hildebrande had done all that Mr. Stubbs had required of him : all the excessive civility of himself, and, at his instigation, of his wife and family, was over and above the bargain. Mr. Stubbs saw very plainly that Captain Comptayne was in the secret, and that something was wanted. He knew that the oak avenue was marked for a fall, therefore it must be money that was needful,—he guessed the Baronet's scheme, and chuckled at it.

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Humble pie had been of late more plentiful at "The Grange" than any other species of viand, for the Comptaynes were (no mistake about it) most

uncommonly hard up. The sons were extravagant and the debts numerous. Sir Hildebrande had exhausted all his credit, and had no further security to offer. The oaks must go or—yes, or—there *was* still an or in the case—there was an alternative, but it involved the consumption of so enormous a piece of that above-mentioned undigestible comestible, that the Baronet could not make up his mind to it. Poor Sir Hildebrande! he could not even have the satisfaction of following little Jack Horner's example, and retiring into the privacy of "a corner:" he was obliged to devour his pie in public, exposed to the gaze of all his friends and acquaintances, who were ready to take notes of all the wry faces he made during the performance. If "he put in his thumb he would pull out no plum," for the inside of his pie was but dust and ashes.

After viewing the subject in every light, turning it this way and that, and even turning himself upside down, as if it was the "martyrdom of St. Peter," the unhappy old man gulped down the huge and unsavoury morsel, and requested an interview with his eldest son, whom he in very short but plain terms informed that they must all either



go to the workhouse, or he (the Captain) must marry Miss Stubbs.

We do not think we could do justice to the storm which ensued between son and sire. The former may well be excused a little warmth in the matter, as his father had not used him honestly in mortgaging and otherwise disposing of the inheritance which he had brought him up to expect. However, he behaved pretty well considering; but we cannot say the same of the elder gentleman, who attacked his unfortunate son as if the family embarrassments were entirely his fault; and insisted upon his marrying Miss Stubbs to make amends for all the mischief he had done.

It always seems to us a cowardly act in parents using the language they often do to their children. It is taking an unfair advantage of their position, tempting or driving them to insubordination, which they afterwards blame them alone for, never considering what share they themselves have had in forming the temper which they deprecate. Some one has said, we cannot remember who, that "every one gets as much respect in the world as they are honestly entitled to." With regard to families, we really think that in nine cases out of

ten it is the case, and that if parents are not treated with the respect they require from their grown-up children, it is very much their own faults. "No man is a hero to his valet de chambre," is an old saying and a true one, and may be applied to all residing under the same roof. Children and young persons are very observing, particularly of *motives*, and have an inherent dislike of mixed ones. A small departure from truth or honesty, which might pass among adults as a matter of course or a good joke, will shock an unsophisticated mind, and perhaps incurably weaken its respect. Respect and love do not always go together: we may *love* very dearly, and bitterly grieve that we cannot *respect*.

The interview terminated in the young man promising obedience; and the allowing himself to be taken up and introduced to Miss Stubbs in the ballroom were the first fruits. His reception we have noticed; his disgust at it was evident. Sir Hildebrande's astonishment at Miss Stubbs' cool behaviour to his son was unbounded.

CHAPTER XIII.

"You are my guest ; unwished, but still my guest."

GOWRIE.

MR. STUBBS may well be pardoned a little self-gratulation (we will not call it pride exactly) as he surveyed the elegant preparations which were made for his company. He walked through the rooms with Sally, and commented upon the decorations with the delight of a child with a new toy.

He had honestly made his money by dint of hard work and great perseverance ; and he had just as much right to exult over his achievement as Sir Edwin Landseer or Mr. Matthew Noble over theirs. If Buffon is right in determining *la genie c'est la patience*, no one ought to deprive Mr. Joshua Stubbs of the first, as no one ever could deny that he possessed an ample share of the latter.

The reception-rooms at "The Gorses" were good but not spacious, therefore Mr. Stubbs had

restored a long unused building attached to the house, and converted it into a ball and concert room. All the arrangements had been made in excellent taste, superintended by Mrs. Davenport, and approved of by Lady Harriet; for the Beauchamp family were admitted behind the scenes at "The Gorses:" with them Mr. Stubbs was perfectly natural; he never attempted to mystify them; when at fault, he frankly confessed it, and asked advice. With the Comptaynes, and people of their stamp, it was Mr. Stubbs' great joke with himself to take everything quite as a matter of course; to comport himself as if he had been used to the style of thing all his life—as if, in fact, *his* pap-boat had been silver with a coat of arms, and *his* christening-robe old point. He was never astonished, and never appeared to take any particular notice of anything. To Sir Arthur Mr. Stubbs had imparted the whole of his previous history, though not that of Sally or his "fixed idea," and, by so doing, had secured the respect and esteem of the family at Moseley Park. The Baronet openly acknowledged that he enjoyed the society of his new neighbour: "it was refreshing," he remarked to his wife, "to

find a companion who could talk of something besides poachers and fox-hunting—who had his eyes open to all that was going on in the world, and made shrewd observations thereupon.” In the minutiae of politics, of course, they did not agree—it was not likely they should; the circumstances under which they had grown up were so totally different, and the scenes through which they had passed had necessarily left impressions of their own. The two gentlemen argued and they reasoned; and generally left off their debates with an increased respect for each other’s mental powers. Sir Arthur had been a reader, Mr. Stubbs a thinker; Sir Arthur was a scholar, Mr. Stubbs a practical man—the acquaintance was mutually beneficial.

From the various gradations through which Mr. Stubbs had passed, he was thoroughly acquainted with life in the abstract apart from conventionalisms, and understood the cause, where Sir Arthur Beauchamp only saw the effect. Though an excellent Christian gentleman, and anxious to combine justice and mercy on the bench, and to think and act charitably towards his neighbours of all degrees, yet Sir Arthur, like every man of

wealth who has been born to his position, could not always know the rights of a case, nor understand the feelings of those below him: he did not realise their temptation to stray from the paths of honesty and virtue; and the better he was himself, the stricter he often was to those in a different sphere of life. The poor and uneducated are quite as uncharitable and erroneous in their strictures upon their betters; but they have little power to harm, and self-interest generally keeps them silent. By constant intercourse with his neighbour, Sir Arthur acquired new ideas and a more extensive knowledge of mankind, which, as a magistrate and member of Parliament, he could turn to account.

“One man, then, is not so much better than another, if he would only think so,” exclaimed Sir Arthur, after he had been listening to some of Mr. Stubbs’ stories, which he designated “the Romances of Factory Life.”

“No, Sir Arthur,” replied his friend; “making every allowance for difference of education and stage of life, there is no more outward vice to be found in the weaver than in the peer; with the inner man I venture not to meddle; that is every

man's own affair, and for which he alone is responsible."

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The guests all quickly assembled at the appointed time, when Sir Hildebrande, who always took the precedence in the county, on this occasion somewhat fussily waived his right to escort Miss Stubbs to the concert-room, in favour of his son; and, with an attempt at jocoseness very unlike himself, remarked, as he offered his arm to Mrs. Davenport, "We must not forget, my dear madam, that we were once young ourselves."

Though inwardly loathing the very sight of him, Miss Stubbs felt it incumbent upon her to treat the Captain, as her uncle's guest, with far more civility than she had yet shown him; and the change in her manner was marked with great satisfaction by Sir Hildebrande. Not that he, for one moment, considered the possibility of a Manchester miss failing to be flattered by the attentions of his heir; yet, the heir in question being so uncommonly shy in advancing, the father felt that a trifle more outward appearance of satisfaction, on the part of the lady, was necessary to encourage the swain, and bring matters on a little

faster. He could perfectly understand her feeling shy and frightened in society, so different to any she had been accustomed to; but he and Lady Comptayne had done their best to reassure her, and make her feel at home among them, and he rejoiced to see that it was taking effect, and that the shyness was wearing off. He flattered himself that her ambition would soon second his views for her advancement, and convert Miss Sally Stubbs into Mrs. Comptayne.

The heir of the Grange finding himself constituted the cavalier, for the evening, of the heiress of Mr. Stubbs and his thousands, exerted himself to make himself most uncommonly agreeable to the lady, while she, for the above reasons, *endured* him. With his father's remarks of the previous evening still ringing in his ears, Mr. Comptayne's conversation went on from gay to sweet, from sweet to tender; till, on the verge of a proposal, he saw Miss Stubbs' agitation was such that he considered it wiser (now he was sure of his ground) to defer the actual deed until a more private opportunity, which would doubtless occur in the course of the evening, and contented himself with touching allusions to the words of the songs.

Miss Stubbs during the time had said little: she was far too deeply agitated for speech; she was in pain, in agony,—in fact, she was dying—of *suppressed laughter*.

It was almost more than Sally could do to command herself; for the fact of Captain Comptayne making soft speeches and looking unutterable things at her—Sally, the disgusting object of Manchester—struck her sense of the ludicrous in the highest degree. She was most extremely amused at the silly things he had brought himself to say to her, and the compliments he had paid to her poor deformed self, all for the sake—she knew it—all for the sake of the thousands she was supposed to have in her pocket. He did not care the value of one of his buttons for her, she was quite aware; and had it not been for the fun of listening to see how far his Californian love would go (we have just coined that word, and hope to be forgiven—mercenary did not convey our idea), Sally would have stopped him, in anger, for his insult. As it was, she determined to let him make a fool of himself, as a revenge for his conduct years ago, and only hoped her strong propensity to laugh would not betray itself too soon. An

incident came to her relief. When the admirer of her golden charms was in the middle of some delicate allusion, and Sally was earnestly wishing she could command her voice sufficiently to beg him to listen to the grand voice of the evening, who was just beginning, and whose exquisite melody she had no intention of losing for all the Captain Comptaynes in Christendom; an emphatic hush—sh—sh came down the room, and he was obliged to desist, though just in the act of making a soft allusion to the state of his heart, as expressed in the words of the song next in the programme. “*La Donna è mobile*” burst forth, and the audience was all attention.

Sally was startled by a smothered exclamation from her neighbour, indicative of surprise and extreme annoyance. She turned her eyes, and saw Captain Comptayne pale as death, with compressed lips and clenched hands. In a few seconds he somewhat recovered, his presence of mind at least; and, leaning his head on his hand, remained cowering down in that attitude until the conclusion of the song, when, muttering as excuse to Miss Stubbs, “the heat of the room, the smell of the gardenias,” or something else equally true, he hastily left the saloon.

Sally's sharp observation told her it was no corporeal ill that had driven her admirer from her side; but whatever the cause of his defection, she was grateful for her release, and truly enjoyed the music and an occasional chat with Dora Beauchamp, from whom she had hitherto been divided.

The concert over, the performers left the room, and the guests lingered in groups, expressing their various opinions of the entertainment, while waiting the announcement of supper; and Captain Comptayne, to Sally's annoyance, reappeared and claimed his right to hand her to the dining-room. He was flushed and excited; protested "his head was quite right; he only required a little supper; he had been walking on the terrace, it was freezing hard, and they should have some first-rate skating on the morrow; of course Miss Stubbs would honour them with her presence on the ice," &c. &c. To all this Miss Stubbs answered little, but took his offered arm with reluctance, much disappointed in her inmost heart at not having Major Beauchamp for her escort.

On crossing the lobby, Captain Comptayne insisted on stopping to look at the moon, which was shining very brightly, and was on the point of beginning a little speech, which he had prepared

for the occasion, and which was intended to save the oaks, and make Miss Sally Stubbs the most fortunate of women; when a slight passing jostle, a “perdona, signor,” and the “grand tenor” glided by with a roll of music in his hand. Sally happening to turn her head at the time, caught a glance of recognition (not pleasant apparently) between the officer and the Italian. The ashy palor of the former returned, and he caught at the window-sill for support. The singer passed and was gone. Sally affected not to perceive the discomfiture of the swain; and, after allowing a few minutes for him to recover, she moved towards the supper-room. A few glasses of wine, which Captain Comptayne hastily swallowed at the side-board, he thought unnoticed, ere he took his seat by the side of the heiress, restored his colour and his self-possession; and he talked so much nonsense, and for him so unusually fast, as to surprise those who were near, and to cause Miss Stubbs decided annoyance. Her fidgettiness was so great that she thought the ladies would never have finished their sandwiches and trifles; and anxiously watched for the last mouthful to be swallowed, that she might make her escape from a cavalier

who was becoming each moment more odious. With a feeling of great relief she received from Mrs. Davenport the preconcerted telegraphic signal that she might break up the sitting, by a bow to Lady Harriet Beauchamp.

Captain Comptayne left the supper-room soon after the ladies retired.

The expression on Sir Hildebrande Comptayne's countenance, as his eyes followed his son, was a puzzle to those who sat near him.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Contention, like a horse
Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose,
And bears down all before him."

HENRY IV.

"WHAT is the matter, my love?" said Lady Harriet Beauchamp, who had lingered behind the rest of the company, to whisper into the ear of her young hostess a few words of ladylike and friendly, not condescending, congratulation upon the excellence of the arrangements, and the pleasure she was sure all the guests had derived from the entertainment. "What is the matter, my love? I fear you are sadly tired; you had better go to your room at once, or you will be too fatigued to-morrow to dance. I will make your excuses, and say you have obeyed my orders. The carriages will be announced as soon as the gentlemen have done their supper, and then you will get rid of us all."

"Indeed, dear Lady Harriet, I am not so very much tired. I should not have been tired at all if it had not been for that horrid man; he has bothered me so that my evening has been spoilt."

"What horrid man, my dear?"

"Captain Comptayne. Oh, I do so dislike him!" said Sally, with a groan.

"Captain Comptayne! Why, my dear child, he will be the greatest man of the county, and he has proved himself this evening your devoted admirer. I assure you that you have been the object of envy to half the girls in the room. I never saw him give himself the slightest trouble to make himself agreeable to any one before."

"Disagreeable, you mean, Lady Harriet, saying such impertinent things; and now the wretch is quite tipsy. He frightened me so all supper-time, and I could not get away from him," said Sally, almost crying from vexation. "And he was so rude to Major Beauchamp, who brought me some grapes, I thought he would have knocked him down. Why cannot he let me alone? I know he despises me for a disgusting object."

Lady Harriet, who saw that something had passed between Captain Comptayne and Sally, grievously

to annoy the latter, desisted from her joking tone, and said seriously, "Tell Mrs. Davenport everything that the man has done to displease you, and she will inform Mr. Stubbs of all that he ought to know, and no doubt he will easily rid you of attentions which you do not seem to appreciate. Captain Comptayne is apparently sincere in his attention to you; and from a few words which his father let drop yesterday to Sir Arthur, he sanctions it. Nay, he even went so far as to hint that no objection was likely to be found on either side. We were rather surprised on hearing the positive manner in which Sir Hildebrande spoke, as Sir Arthur remarked to me that he thought he knew your uncle better, and I thought that *I* knew *yourself*. Harry, who is acquainted with his messmate's character, vowed he was only flirting to please his father. Never mind him; be very cool and distant to him, and if he asks you the reason refer him to Mrs. Davenport, who will tell him that you have not forgiven the insult of getting tipsy in your presence."

"Thank you, Lady Harriet, that will be famous. I do not think he will come near me again after that. I will tell you some day, if uncle will let

me, why I dislike him so much. These Comptaynes are very queer bodies."

Lady Harriet was very much amused at the idea of the Comptaynes of "The Grange" being so coolly designated "queer bodies" by a "Manchester girl," and she said so,

"But surely they are not real ladies and gentlemen: they are not the least like you and Sir Arthur. The Misses Comptayne are not like your daughters, and Captain Comptayne is not like—" Major Beauchamp, we dare say she was going to say, but she did not—she only said "a gentleman."

"Thank God they are not, my dear girl!" exclaimed her ladyship emphatically. "I should be sorry to claim connection with anything so exquisite. But they are an order or genus of themselves. They are Comptaynes, and if you had lived in the county a little longer you would know what that means. But they seem, one and all, to have taken a great fancy to you, and you, ungrateful girl that you are, do not feel it as you ought."

"I only wish they would let me alone, for I do not like any of them, and all their patronage is quite thrown away upon me," said Sally, laughing.

"It is a matter of great surprise to me," con-

tinued Lady Harriet, musingly, "to see the Comptaynes taking so much trouble for people—"

"Who came from Manchester," put in Sally.

"Not exactly that, my dear. I was going to say for people who have not a pedigree as long as from here to 'The Grange.'"

"Oh, for the matter of that, Lady Harriet, my pedigree reaches from here to California, I rather suspect, in Captain Comptayne's opinion. But really," continued Sally, more seriously, "I am very sorry that my dear uncle has proclaimed his intention of making me a great heiress, if it is to subject me to the insulting annoyance of a man like Captain Comptayne, who has neither the good feeling nor the spirit of a Christian or a gentleman; and who, I know, loathes me personally. You see, don't you, Lady Harriet, that it must be for my money that these disagreeable people plague me so?"

"Yes, my dear, it must be for that if they do annoy you, because they have had no opportunities of discovering what makes us all like you so much; and you do not seem inclined to allow them to do so, for you certainly do not show them your best side."

"I hope I am not rude, Lady Harriet, for, indeed, I only mean to be cool, and to show them that I do not wish for their civilities."

"Not rude, my love, by any means ; but unmistakably and freezingly distant, which astonishes them greatly, and is what they have not been accustomed to. They have reigned supreme in the county for so many years, simply, I fancy, because no one has taken the trouble to dethrone them, not because they have any positive right that I am aware of. But we must now join the other ladies, as it will be soon time for us to go home. Take my advice, or rather ask Mrs. Davenport if it would not be as well for you to refuse dancing with the Captain to-morrow night."

"Oh, if I could only escape !" whispered Sally, as they entered the drawing-room.

Lady Harriet immediately engaged Mrs. Davenport in conversation, and told her what had passed between her and Miss Stubbs. Mrs. Davenport thanked her ladyship warmly, and promised that Sally should not be again left to the mercy of the lisping soldier. The gentlemen now appearing, Sir Arthur, on a hint from his lady, immediately approached Miss Stubbs, and requested that she

would not forget she was to open the ball the next night with him, and dance the second dance with his nephew.

Sally looked up rather surprised, but catching a glance from Lady Harriet, smilingly acquiesced in an arrangement which she had not heard of before, but which she quickly perceived was intended to secure a comfortable beginning to her evening.

"What a pleasant party!" was the observation of the Beauchamp family, as they drove home.

"What a vulgar set-out altogether!" was the remark of the two eldest Misses Comptayne, before they had fairly left the precincts of "The Gorses."

We will not weary our readers with any more of "The Grange" conversations regarding "the new tenants," as the word vulgar appears too often to be agreeable to us. We hope our readers have as great a dislike to that word as we have ourselves, and that they will agree with whoever it was that said "Vulgar is a word used oftenest by the vulgar." As the word was invented for such people as the Comptayne family, we will leave them to the full enjoyment of it.

"Well, my lad!" exclaimed Sir Hildebrande, slapping the back of his son and heir with a jocoseness and familiarity most unprecedented in the life of that starched piece of propriety, who so seldom even addressed his eldest son and eldest daughter but as Captain Comptayne and Miss Comptayne; "well, my lad! you have got on famously to-night. I suppose you will finish off the business to-morrow; and the day after we can go through the form of settlements and all the rest with the old man."

"Well, sir," replied the son, "I think it is nearly all settled: the lady seems to have no objection to me."

"Objection! I should think not," almost shouted the Baronet in his excitement; "the idea of a Manchester miss, a Manchester smut, with only one eye, and as crooked as a ram's horn, making objections to the heir of a baronetcy—the heir of an estate like ours!"

"Father!—Sir!" exclaimed the Captain, drawing himself up with more dignity than we could have conceived possible; "father!—sir! if I marry Miss Stubbs, she will be *my wife*, Mrs. Comptayne, will she not?"

"Of course, Captain Comptayne," replied his father; "what do you mean by asking so foolish a question?"

"I mean, sir," continued the son, "that, as she will be my wife, I shall expect her treated with proper respect."

"Of course, Captain Comptayne," said the Baronet; "you may depend upon that."

"By proper respect, I mean this," said the son, waxing wroth and speaking with energy and decision, and moreover with a fierceness which made his father quail before him,— "I mean this, that if I marry Miss Stubbs, for whom I do not care personally one button, merely to please you, to patch up with her money an estate which you have allowed to tumble to pieces, and thus cheated me out of my lawful inheritance; if I am forced to marry a girl whom I can never love, though I shall be obliged at first to pretend to do so, I suppose, she must and she shall be treated with proper respect. I will not have her called a Manchester smut in my presence; I will not be taunted with having made a low connection. Unless my wife is treated as Mrs. Comptayne by you all, I will not marry: I will not sell myself for gold, and then be taunted

and pointed at as having disgraced the family. She will know soon enough that I do not love her; but she shall never know the want of respect if I can help it." So saying, he stalked out of the room, and slammed the door with violence.

There was a good deal of gentlemanly feeling, more than we should have been disposed to give the gallant Captain credit for, in this address to his father, though the tone and substance were not exactly the right sort to use towards a parent; yet we cannot doubt that the old one thoroughly deserved it; and, doubtless, the sagacity of the reader has ere this discovered that both gentlemen were—we were on the point of writing *worse*, we then changed our minds for *better*, but not being able to decide which epithet was the correct one under the circumstances, we finally decided on applying the term—under the influence of the various vintages which had appeared on the supper-table of Mr. Stubbs.

The gentlemen were not inebriated. No; they had perfect command of their faculties; but they were in that condition in which telling home-truths seems to be an especial gratification, and

speaking out their minds freely, without reference to feelings or propriety, seems to be hailed as a relief.

Sir Hildebrande looked at the door through which his hopeful son had just passed in such haste for some minutes with a variety of emotions depicted on his careworn countenance. The predominant one, at first, appeared to be astonishment at the very independent method in which his heir had expressed himself, so different from the unquestioning obedience he had hitherto apparently paid to his father. Then, he did not quite understand why his son should be so touchy, why he (Sir Hildebrande) might not call Miss Stubbs anything he pleased behind her back. But his face at last settled down to a look of anxiety; the Baronet was evidently afraid he had gone too far; that, if he did not take care, the match would not come off, and then what would become of the oaks, in fact of the whole estate, over which Mr. Stubbs possessed every right that a mortgage could give! Yes! *coute qui coute* the marriage must be settled as soon as possible. Could it once get abroad, the Captain might be able to borrow some money upon the strength of his expectations,



which might be applied to arranging the affairs of his second son Hugo.

All this and much more passed through the muddled brains of the Baronet as he sat before the library fire. He took from his pocket a letter, which he read and re-read apparently with little satisfaction; he rubbed his eyes, puckered his face, and at last, overcome with the champagne and mental worry, the old man broke into a childish whimper, and fairly cried himself to sleep, with the letter still open in his hand.

As the letter was wide open, it is surely no breach of confidence to tell what was in it; we may be certain that had the butler come in at that minute he would soon have mastered the contents, and retailed them at the "second table" the next day. The letter had been received that morning, and was from the above-mentioned Hugo, whose pecuniary affairs have often been under discussion. He was one of those numerous young gentlemen who are always waiting for an appointment for something to do, though, if they got anything to do, we doubt exceedingly their doing it. He lived in London, lounged about all day, required an unlimited supply of cigars and primrose kids, and

frequented all those various places of entertainment in which unprofitable younger sons are tolerated, and danced or flirted with when there are no eldest sons in the way. He hung on to the skirts of the aristocracy, the *crème de la crème*,—Comptayne pride not allowing a descent into the regions where even a younger son of good family would be cordially welcomed by many a handsome girl, whose father had untold thousands in his pocket. All this was forbidden fruit to a Comptayne; and as Comptaynes, the idea that *they* could thus renovate their broken fortunes never entered their heads. They saw men of a higher social rank than themselves fetch brides from the bank or the counting-house, but they never thought of the possibility of doing the same themselves.

Hugo had lived as a man about town for many years, doing nothing, and living upon as little as possible. The allowance which his father gave him barely served for the necessities of life—*i.e.*, cigars and primrose kids; and he could not avoid getting into debt if he had tried. But we do not think he had tried very hard, for getting into debt, as we remarked in an early chapter, was not considered a crime in the Comptayne family;

therefore, into debt he did get. To get out of debt, or rather to free himself from duns, he gambled, and was very frequently successful to a large extent; but occasionally luck turned against him, and he lost severely. Under the latter circumstances his custom was to apply to his father for the satisfaction of his "debts of honour," and hitherto, with much grumbling, they had been paid. We noticed how that, for the accommodation he received from Mr. Stubbs, Sir Hildebrande had been obliged to introduce that gentleman "to the County," and comply with certain other of his behests. But now another letter from Hugo had arrived containing an account of large liabilities, and an assurance of the utter impossibility of keeping his head any longer above water unless real assistance was granted him: his person was no longer safe, and his credit was gone.

The letter wound up by stating that, unless his father would pay *all* his debts or satisfy his creditors in some way or other, and give him a better allowance than formerly, he should take the law into his own hands—for he was getting tired of this sort of thing—and marry a rich wife. He knew a girl who had lots of money who was dying

to have him. She was the daughter of a pork-butcher and sausage-maker in St. George's-in-the-East, and then, when he was married, he thought he should go abroad till the grouse-shooting began, &c. &c.

Such was the substance of the letter over which the unlucky father had fumed and fretted himself all day; and which obliged him to give his eldest son a hint before he went to the concert to bring matters on a bit with the heiress. It was thinking of the distress of his second son, who was unmistakably the favourite, which lit his face up with so peculiar a smile, when he saw the Captain leave the supper-room so abruptly, to seek, his father thought, the society of Miss Stubbs. It was the notion that all his anxieties were coming to a conclusion, aided by a few extra glasses of champagne, that made him clap his son on the back with such an awkward attempt at facetiousness.

The Baronet had raged and fumed about the house all the morning in a state indescribable: the idea of the butcher's daughter had well-nigh driven him crazy; it was utterly insupportable. He attached far greater importance to that than

to the probability of his son's incarceration; and Hugo intended he should.

In writing the letter home, Hugo and his brother Bertram had calculated to a nicety the effect which the hint about the fair daughter of the pork-butcher and sausage-maker of St. George's-in-the-East would have upon the "Auld House at Hame." They knew, after the last "pecuniary relief," that a merely pitiful tale of distress would avail but little; but the bare mention of the pork-butcher's heiress would, if anything could, produce the desired effect, and the "relieving officer would shell out handsomely." These young men possessed what is very common among younger sons—namely, a strong faith in the bottomless nature of the "governor's" purse, and imagined, when they were denied, that it was entirely owing to the parsimonious inclination of the "governor," or the interference of the son and heir; therefore they absolutely refused to believe that the "governor" was in reality as hard up as they were themselves; and they patiently expected great things from this their *coup d'état*. They were both thorough Comptaynes, and had about as much idea of

marrying a city heiress as the Prince of Wales had; but they thought it a capital bit of fun to frighten those at home, now that the condition they had reduced themselves to through their extravagance and folly was become no joke between them.

The law of primogeniture, generally speaking, is a boon to England, as it throws a certain number of well-educated gentlemanly men upon their own resources, and ennobles the professions they embrace. But, in the case of the Comptayne youths, they were thrown upon the world entirely without resources, and the pride of the family prevented their entering upon any mode of life in which they might provide for themselves honourably and respectably. That was the fault of the individual family; the law of primogeniture was not to blame.

Sir Hildebrande slept long and heavily: he dreamt of sausage-making and pig-butcherer, and actually saw his favourite Hugo in apron and sleeves preparing to assist in the slaughter, while Mrs. Hugo Comptayne, with enormous red cheeks, was looking on and admiring the scene. Two very fat babies, excited by the squeaks of the

grunters, crowed and kicked, and finally catching sight of him (Sir Hildebrande), vociferously hailed him as "Grandpa." He turned with disgust, and hastened from the yard, when a gory hand was laid on his shoulder to detain him.

"What is the matter, Sir Hildebrande? Are you ill, my dear? Why do not you come to bed?"

The Baronet woke up, rubbed his eyes, stared about him, and saw his wife in dressing-gown, with taper in hand, standing over him in some alarm. He perceived that he was in his own study, and that the fire and lamp were gone out; he felt very cold, and a dim idea stole over him that he had been asleep in his armchair all night, and that Hugo was not married to the pork-butcher's daughter after all. He, therefore, roused himself up, and, rather stiff from the cold, followed her ladyship upstairs, and was soon again asleep in his legitimate place. We hope his dreams were of a pleasanter description; at any rate we will leave him to the private enjoyment of them.

CHAPTER XV.

"Who can speak
The mingled passions that surprised his heart?"
THOMPSON.

CAPTAIN COMPTAYNE having left the library with a loud bang of the door, indicative of considerable mental perturbation, retreated in haste to his own chamber, where, quickly divesting himself of his evening dress, he sat down in dressing-gown and slippers to think.

Now the gentleman had two or three things on his mind, which we trust will in due time appear, as well as two or three glasses of champagne in his head. The two things amalgamated about as well as oil and vinegar; therefore his thoughts were not of a very lucid description. It was necessary—he was sober enough to feel that it was become essential for him—to decide on a plan of action; but he had not quite sufficient command over his intellectual powers to make up his mind what was to be done.

He was greatly pleased with the progress he had made with Miss Stubbs, and had talked himself into the idea that it might not be so bad a scheme, after all. She was quiet and ladylike, and no doubt, out of gratitude, would let him do exactly as he pleased. The supper was good and the wines excellent; he should like to be able to drink such wine as that every day. He compared it with the wretched stuff in his paternal cellar, which though it was produced in bottles covered with cobwebs, he firmly believed to have been manufactured by his grandfather's housekeeper. He drew comparisons between the luxury and *agrement* of "The Gorses," and the penurious formality of "The Grange," in a manner not particularly favourable to the latter. In short, throughout that evening, he had made up his mind the thing should be done, and done it would have been but for a slight interruption.

That interruption had unsettled his mind by recalling recollections, and incidents, and scenes, of which he did not at that time particularly wish to be reminded. He drank more wine than usual to banish unpleasing reflections, and had succeeded in restoring his spirits to their tone, when his

father's ill-timed coarse pleasantries roused his temper, and caused the scene we have described.

"What the deuce is to be done?" muttered he for about the twentieth time, before he attempted to answer himself. "What the deuce is to be done? I wonder if the fellow recognised me! I do not think he did, and yet I cannot feel sure. I fancied he touched my arm in the passage; then, at any rate, he could not know my name. He could not find out anything about me; no one could tell him anything about Lieutenant Cumberland of the Royal Navy, if he did ask. I saw him safe out of the house on the road to Oddborough; he is engaged to a concert at Liverpool to-morrow; I found that out. What the deuce had I better do? I hardly think he can have blown me; where would be the use?"

It was very plain that the gallant soldier's ideas hovered between admiration for Miss Stubbs' purse and an undefined dread of something connected with one of the performers in the concert. He had turned deadly pale, we observed, at the commencement of the song by the grand tenor, and at its conclusion had left the room. He returned at the end of the concert with a flush on his cheek,

which showed how the interval had been spent. Again he changed colour upon an accidental encounter with Signor Zangarelli in the lobby, and even Miss Stubbs had seen a glance of recognition on the part of the Italian. As soon as the ladies had left the supper-room, he drank off a tumbler of champagne, and followed them. Sir Hildebrande flattered himself, from the excited countenance of his son, that the hour was come—that he was keeping an appointment with the lady; but no—Captain Comptayne, wrapping himself in the first rug he could lay hands on, went out of the hall-door towards the stables, where he discovered that the carriages to take the musicians back to Oddborough were preparing. He placed himself so that he could see them all get in. He stood in the cold and snow for nearly an hour before he had the satisfaction of seeing the vehicles drive off, and of being certain that one contained Signor Zangarelli. He then had returned to the supper-room, found the gentlemen gone, had a good glass of hot punch, and repaired to the drawing-room in the full determination of putting an end to the thing at once; but, not being able to enter into any further conversation with Miss Stubbs, was

obliged to postpone "the momentous question" until the morrow, and returned home with his family. During the short drive the unpleasant remarks made by his eldest sisters upon his future connections galled him extremely, and he began to think that, if that was the way his wife was to be spoken of by his sisters, he had better keep out of the scrape altogether; for no man, whatever may be his object in marrying,—and though, as we once heard a gentleman say, "She is not exactly the person I should have chosen, but, &c."—no man will quietly allow his wife to be disrespectfully spoken of; it is not in human nature; and Sir Hildebrande ought to have known better than encourage that style of conversation. His father's application of the words "Manchester smut" to Miss Stubbs filled his cup of indignation, and sent the Captain to bed in a rage.

As our friend could not settle anything to his satisfaction, every plan that came across his brain resolved itself into the question, "What the deuce am I to do?" He therefore very wisely gave up the attempt to arrive at any conclusion that night, and got into bed.

The next morning son and sire met in their

usual manner, having neither of them any very lucid idea of the occurrences or conversation of the preceding evening. The latter had even forgotten the skating party, which he had himself arranged on the lake which divided the park from the domain of Mr. Stubbs, and had ordered his horse to be sharpened to take him to Oddborough in the afternoon, feeling a necessity for some sort of locomotion to allay the fever of his mind and body. But being reminded of his engagement for twelve o'clock by his sister Beatrix, he was fain to acquiesce in his own plans, and devote himself for the morning to Miss Stubbs.

To the ice they all repaired, and most of the party seemed to enjoy the fun. Many were the tumbles, and merry were the consequent peals of laughter. In spite of all his attempts to appear at ease, never did Captain Comptayne feel less so. Miss Stubbs' manner was, to him, freezingly distant; not a word could he obtain from either her or Mrs. Davenport; all his civilities were coldly rejected. He saw other people noticed it as well as himself. Could she have heard anything? Could that confounded Italian have let out anything, either to the servants or Madame Ruboni,

who he saw was still of the party? What if he was smoked? He must make himself scarce, that was certain. "What the deuce am I to do?" was again his mental query. He went home to dinner with the question still unanswered.

Matters were not improved when he got home, for on his way upstairs Lady Comptayne beckoned him into her dressing-room, and gave him Hugo's letter to read, of which he had till then been kept in ignorance. He expressed annoyance at his brother's "fix," as he called it, but was really not disposed at that minute to give his attention to any one's affairs except his own, and therefore returned it with little comment; but, when his mother gave him a copy of his father's answer, which was short and to the purpose, he did not take it so agreeably. It set forth, first, deep and bitter wrath at the proposed alliance; and, secondly, entreated him to try and patch up matters for a few days, as, by that time, Hildebrande's marriage with a wealthy heiress would be positively announced, and the family credit would rise in consequence.

Captain Comptayne read to the end of these few lines with darkening brow, then throwing down the letter, exclaimed furiously,—

“Why am I to be the family victim? It is the business of the younger brothers to shift for themselves. If they cannot live without getting into debt, why, let them marry some one that can keep them. They have no right to expect that their eldest brother should do so. It seems that I am intended to marry Miss Stubbs in order to keep my precious relations out of gaol with her money. By Jove, I'll not do it! It is a scandalous shame! The estate is entailed upon me; and if I consent to sell myself to pay off the mortgages, it shall be for my own benefit, and no one else's.”

And he paced the room in anger for some minutes, his mother being too much astonished at this outbreak from her usually listless son to know what to say. At last he approached her sofa, and with a stern look and firm voice said,—

“Mother, forgive me if I have startled you by my violence; but pray, tell my father, from me, that I shall not propose to Miss Stubbs. I shall leave for Aldershatt this evening.”

He was quitting the room in haste, when Lady Comptayne sprang towards him with frantic eagerness, exclaiming,—

“Oh, Hildebrande, don't go! For God's sake,

don't go! You will break my heart—you will break your father's heart—we shall all be ruined! Oh, for pity's sake, stop and listen to me! We have no one to depend upon but you."

And the usually imperturbable woman sank almost senseless on the floor, overcome by the intensity of her emotions. Captain Comptayne raised his mother, and gently laid her upon the sofa, much moved by her deep distress. He kissed his mother's forehead, and supported her in his arms, with far more demonstrations of affection than was ordinary in the icy atmosphere of "The Grange," in which arctic region the individuals exhibited about as much feeling for each other as one iceberg for another. They clashed occasionally, but a thaw was rare.

Frightened by her ladyship's hysterical sobs, Captain Comptayne besought her to be calm, and explain to him all that was the matter, promising to do anything that was reasonable. By degrees Lady Comptayne, becoming more calm, related as well as she could all that she understood of the family affairs; and her son comprehended clearly, for the first time, the nature of the abyss over which they tottered.

Sir Hildebrande had informed him that he was terribly in debt, but had never condescended to enter into details ; therefore his son was ignorant of the extreme poverty to which they were reduced, and that nothing except his seat in Parliament prevented Sir Hildebrande from being either in gaol or an outlaw. Now that all was made clear to him, and he was told that, after the oaks, nothing was available for sale, he saw that something was imperatively demanded to be done.

He sat with his hands pressed on his brow in deep meditation for half an hour. Nothing audible escaped from his lips but his ever recurring question, "What the deuce can I do?" His mother wisely forbore to answer this, though her tongue was ready to say—though she longed to whisper in his ear,—

"Marry Miss Stubbs."

At last the Captain seemed to have made up his mind "what the deuce he was to do," and, looking up with a calmer countenance, took his mother's hand, and said firmly,—

"Mother, dear, I will marry Miss Stubbs."

"Oh, thank you, my darling boy," sobbed her ladyship, throwing herself into his arms.

"But, mother, listen to me; I must make my own terms. Miss Stubbs' money shall only go to benefit this estate, which is entailed upon me, and of which she will eventually be mistress; and a jointure, to the full extent of her fortune, shall be settled upon her. I will do all that lies in my power to make you and my father comfortable; but not one penny of my wife's fortune shall my brothers touch. Let them take care of themselves. Let them work. I work in my profession; why should not they find something to do? Other people's sons work. The younger sons of dukes and earls work; why should not they? As I heard my father say to a beggar yesterday, 'It is better to work than to beg.' And I am sure," continued he to himself, "it is better to work or starve than to go fortune-hunting."

The idea of *work* applied in reference to a Comptayne by a Comptayne was too much for her ladyship's pride. She fired up, her own peculiar temper was aroused, and she hastily ran over a hundred reasons, good in her eyes, why a Comptayne never had worked, and never could work, and never ought to work.

To all this her son listened in silence. He with-

drew his arm from her, and rising, walked to the fire, and leaning against the chimney-piece, patiently awaited the end of reasons which his mixing with the world daily showed him to be utter nonsense. Being but one of a multitude at Aldershot, and other camps and garrisons, and, moreover, not having a long purse to back him, the Comptayne pride had been considerably knocked out of him ; and though there was plenty of it left for every-day use, yet he did not see why all the comfort and happiness of life was to be sacrificed merely to the keeping up of the Comptayne dignity. Having waited till her ladyship had exhausted both her arguments and her anger, he again stated his perfect willingness to do anything in his power to promote his parents' comfort ; but resolutely maintained his determination not to assist his brothers.

With this Lady Comptayne was obliged to be satisfied, and extorted from him a promise to go to Mr. Stubbs' ball, and to decide the matter with Miss Stubbs that very night.

The latter promise was made by Captain Comptayne with some internal misgivings, as he felt that, should she maintain her coldness towards

him, he should probably not exchange a single word with her all the evening. If that proved to be the case, he was determined to return to his regiment the next morning to escape all the bothers, as he called them, and postpone his suit of Miss Stubbs *sine die*. With this end in view he made preparations for a hasty packing up if necessary, and before the dinner-bell rang the gallant gentleman had persuaded himself that a retreat was the very best thing that could happen to him under the circumstances ; and that, once lost among the many at Aldershott, he should be safe and have time to consider seriously what his next move had better be ; in fact, "what the deuce he was to do."

He had promised his mother that he would go to the ball, so go he must.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Soft! I did but dream.

Oh! coward conscience, how thou dost afflict me!"

RICHARD III.

SURPRISE is too meagre a word, we allow, but we cannot find one that will fully express the feelings of Sir Hildebrande, Lady Comptayne, and the Misses Comptayne, on their entering the drawing-room at "The Gorses," and perceiving that the amusements of the evening had begun—that they, *the family* of the county, had not been waited for! It was unprecedented, in the annals of Oddshire, that an entertainment, which the inhabitants of "The Grange" had signified their gracious will and pleasure to patronise, should commence before the arrival of these illustrious personages.

But then, you see, poor Mr. Stubbs was a fresh comer, and, moreover, a "Manchester man." And how could he be supposed to understand the manners and customs of good society? Perhaps, if he had, he might have avoided doing what was

deemed a solecism in high breeding among the inhabitants of Oddshire. Be that as it may, Mr. Stubbs, on his cards of invitation, mentioned that dancing would begin at nine o'clock; and, "though on pleasure he was bent," he had a punctual mind: dancing did begin at nine o'clock, and those who were not in the house at that time lost the first dance. That was all in his mind: it was either their own fault or their coachmen's; it was no affair of his.

But to the majority of the company, who had been born and bred in Oddshire, and nourished with the idea that the Comptaynes were, in some way or other (not very apparent to those who considered the matter), quite superior to the rest of the world, the fact that the great family had not been waited for was the grand event of the evening. Some slight murmurs might have been heard from the bystanders as Mr. Stubbs led Lady Harriet Beauchamp to the top of the room, as soon as the clock had struck nine, and, clapping his hands, desired the musicians to begin. But in spite of the apparent dissatisfaction, which was the consequence of force of habit, the majority were glad that they were not taken at their word, and

rejoiced in their inmost hearts that the Comptaynes had *not* been waited for. All had received some snub or other, which they could never have summoned courage to pay off for themselves, and were, consequently, delighted to get it done second hand, while they stood at a safe distance and could come to no harm.

What a number of cowards there are in the world, after all! What a number of people surround us on all sides, that go on, day after day, either in the beaten track of folly for want of courage to turn aside, or who follow the multitude to do folly, not from the love of foolishness, but from the bare fact that the multitude is there! But if some one, rather bolder than the rest, does venture to oppose or to deviate, with what shy, but genuine delight, is the opposition received, and the new leader followed!

Though many a joyful face might be seen in the mazes of that country dance, yet many rejoiced with trembling, and many an anxious eye was turned towards the door to see in what manner the Comptaynes, when they did arrive, would comport themselves.

Mr. Stubbs, in reality, though some persons

thought differently, intended no slight or disrespect towards Sir Hildebrande and Lady Comptayne. We even doubt whether he ever thought about them at all; and, if he did, it was merely with the passing idea, "that they did not care much about dancing." They were of little importance to him; he treated them with civility as neighbours; he was under no awe of them; he did not like them, and therefore did not court their society; and most certainly he was not a man to put himself out of his way to discover their likes or dislikes, or any of their whims and vagaries.

As it was, the "haughtycrat" and his family arrived very late, and had the satisfaction of being received by Miss Stubbs, leaning on the arm of Major Beauchamp, with whom she had just danced the first quadrille. Captain Comptayne was acknowledged by the heiress with cool civility; and we may be permitted to anticipate matters and say, that the gallant gentleman could not, either at that time or in the course of the evening, obtain a single opportunity of speaking to her. Miss Stubbs had her engagement-cards quite full, and had evidently determined not to dance with Captain Comptayne at all that evening.



"Conscience," says Prince Hamlet, "does make cowards of us all."

We propose, while we agree to that sentiment, to propose an additional one equally true. Conscience does make heroes of us all. For what person, with the inward consciousness of deserving to stand in either a ridiculous or disgraceful position, does not imagine that he is the "observed of all observers," and that every man, woman, or child he meets with, is looking at, talking of, or thinking about him?

Captain Comptayne, who, we remarked in the last chapter, had two or three things on his mind, the knowledge of which, he had reason to believe, was not confined to his own breast, had these comfortable reflections, as he surveyed the various groups scattered about the spacious apartments. He, poor deluded man, felt certain that he was the topic of conversation with the knots of talkers; that every silent person was thinking *of* him; that every peal of laughter was *at* him; that the smile which played round the mouth of Miss Stubbs, as she was wheeled round in a *deux-temps* by Harry Beauchamp, was *at his expense*; that every one who glanced towards the part of the room where

he stood, leaning his back to the wall, in moody silence, was looking *at* him, to see how he bore it. We believe that not a single person was, after all, troubling their heads about him, for he was not a general favourite, if we may except some few partnerless young ladies, who wondered why he did not dance, and who would not have objected, for the sake of "The Grange" in prospect, to endure the companionship of the *insouciant* young heir in perpetuity. These alone, of all the assembled company, took notice of him, or remarked how nervous and ill he appeared; but of the reason neither they nor any one else in the room knew more than you do, reader, unless you have been looking on.

Captain Comptayne feeling most uncommonly uncomfortable, and not inclined to make himself agreeable or useful in any way, betook himself to the refreshment-room, and obtained a supply of champagne, from the imbibing of which his nerves felt the benefit. Captain Comptayne was not a drinker; and we believe we may safely say that the previous evening was the first occasion in which he had ever had recourse to wine as a comforter. On so hastily leaving the concert-room, he

had entered, to escape observation, the door of the first apartment which he saw open, which proved to be that of the refreshment-room, where, as much for something to say or do, he asked for champagne. Finding it do him good, he repeated the dose, and under its influence again sought Miss Stubbs. The personal encounter with Signor Zangarelli unnerved him a second time, and he had a fresh encounter with his friendly bottle, which put him into the condition which gave such great offence to Miss Stubbs. On this occasion he, however, merely took a few glasses while he considered over his plan of action, and having arranged that to his satisfaction, very soon took his leave of "The Gorses" unperceived by anybody; and, we may say, unmissed, save by his father, who was at a loss to reconcile his present mode of action with his previous promises to Lady Comptayne.

Captain Comptayne returned to "The Grange," made up his mind immediately to rejoin his regiment at Aldershatt, went to bed long before the rest of the family came home, and before they were stirring the next morning was some miles on his journey, leaving the explanation it pleased him

to make of his hasty measure in a note to his mother.

Though the best of everything had been provided for their entertainment; though they had had plenty to eat and plenty to drink; though the courtesy of Mr. Stubbs had prevented the young ladies from being obliged to sit still for want of partners; though there was small talk and whist in abundance for the seniors, yet the evening, pronounced so delightful by every one else, passed off dully to the Comptayne family, with the exception of Beatrix, who really enjoyed herself as she had never done at a party before. The Comptaynes had not been waited for; their coming or not coming had been treated as a matter of indifference by Mr. Stubbs of Manchester. Though treated with perfect courtesy and civility, it was not marked; they had not been treated better than every one else. They felt themselves left among the common herd. It boded ill; their glory must be departing. They could no longer shut their eyes to the fact that their glory *was* departing. The reign of the Comptaynes, which had lasted for so many generations, was drawing to a close; in a little while it would be over; they would no longer

be the royal family of Oddshire. But Stubbs of Manchester would reign in their stead. They saw their former dutiful subjects already pass them with airs of defiance. People sat down by their side ; people spoke to them ; people danced to the same quadrilles with them, who had never before dared to approach so close without special invitation.

Alas ! alas ! the glory of the house of Comp-tayne was departing, and Stubbs of Manchester would reign in its stead.

CHAPTER XVII.

"From place to place we still pursue
Content, and hope in each to view
The visionary guest."

THOMAS DUNCOMBE.

WITH what totally different feelings are localities regarded by the visitor and the resident! How many charms does a resident find in a place voted by the visitor as "dull as dust!" and, on the other hand, how frequently does the inhabitants of a gay watering-place sigh for a little cessation from the everlasting bustle and the endless variety of the human countenance!

We know of no place to which the last remark better applies than to the camp at Aldershott. What a charming place it appears when seen for the first time!—so lively, so gay,—the huts so picturesque,—all bustle and activity,—red-coats scattered in every direction,—music playing, horses prancing, flags flying—so delightful! "I should like to be quartered here for a year or

two," says the newly-arrived, as he stands near the big bell and surveys the scene around him. On one hand he beholds the general's hut and the spacious church; on the other, the commander-in-chief's abode, and a little further on Her Majesty's pavilion; while below him are the permanent barracks looking much like an ant-hill. He leaves the eminence, and strolling down, enters the elegant club-house, where, perhaps, preparations are making for a ball, which bustle attracts many more loungers besides himself. He watches the falcons fed, and, continuing his walk, crosses the parade-grounds, and passes among streets of huts. He sees the theatre, and has a most tempting bill of fare put into his hands for the evening's performance; and, to crown his delight, receives an invitation to dine at the mess of the ——. So pass a few days, and the visitor departs in a state of envy at those "lucky dogs" whose fate has placed them at the Camp of Aldershott.

But what do the inhabitants of the huts say? They vote the camp the dullest, dustiest, most disagreeable place they ever were in; they are tired of seeing nothing but red and blue coats;

they are tired of the everlasting parades ; and martial music for them has lost its charms.

Now, no doubt many of these feelings arise from the perversity of human nature, which refuses to be pleased with a compulsory location. Human nature seldom makes the best of a bad business ; that is the act of reason. No man likes to feel that he is set down in a place by other will than his own ; and that, until that other will gives the word, he is powerless to move. It is not a pleasant feeling certainly, but it is one which most human beings have to bear, as very few of us are free to please ourselves alone ; and we much doubt if anyone is the happier for possessing entire freedom of action : few can bear to have sole charge of themselves. But, independently of the coercive nature of a residence in Aldershott Camp, we must confess that it is a stupid place, after the eye and the ear have become accustomed to the daily routine of the "pomp and circumstance of war." It is situated on a barren moor ; the dust from the light soil is, in dry weather, exceedingly annoying, and renders walking a disagreeable performance. Then the walking across a barren heath is not of itself an interesting

employment; and the man who has not a horse to convey him into the cultivated tracts beyond needs to possess a strong mind as preventive of ennui. Once off the moor, the country is pretty, and there is plenty of society in the neighbourhood.

As we are taking our readers merely on a visit to the camp, and do not intend to detain them long, we hope that they will be as much pleased with it as we were ourselves on our first visit; particularly as, being winter-time, and the ground partially covered with snow, there is no inconvenience from dust, and Aldershott certainly looks its best. The black huts, striped and patched with white, have a quaint and pretty effect; and the scarlet coats of the men on parade stand out in good relief upon the snowy ground; while at night the numerous lamps reflecting upon the icy crystals, and relieved here and there by a red light, indicating proximity to the pump, are worth looking at once in a lifetime; and if you are lucky enough to get admission to the theatre, you will witness some far from mediocre amateur performances.

Were we to state at what time in the morning Captain Comptayne left Comptayne Grange, and at what time either on that day or the next he

arrived at his quarters in Aldershatt Camp, the careful incognito in which we have hitherto kept Oddshire would be at once destroyed. A hundred railway maps would be immediately spread out, and a hundred *Bradshaws* produced to give evidence upon the subject; and soon, with the assistance of both, combined with careful calculation, a result would be obtained, and a hundred persons at least would be enabled unhesitatingly to place their fingers upon the position we occupy in Great Britain; the precise latitude and longitude of Oddborough would be ascertained, and a quiet, unsuspecting county-town would awake some morning and find itself famous.

Sir Timothy Timorous would be speedily elevated into the proud position of Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, from the unusual (?) fact of *his* park possessing an avenue of oaks; and, moreover, because his wife and daughters *did* once assert their right to the front row of a concert, for which they had paid double, and did once cut somebody else's wife and daughters in a thunder-storm. And Mr. Bumptious would be obliged to personate the modest, unpresuming baronet of Moseley Park, as he is the possessor of five daughters and a



nephew ; and both gentlemen will either consider themselves, or be obliged by their friends to be, answerable for all the sayings and doings of our two baronets.

As we wish to prevent anything so unsatisfactory from taking place, we shall annihilate time and space, and simply inform our readers that Captain Comptayne arrived at Aldershott in perfect safety ; and that the change of air, or change of scene, had a beneficial effect upon him, for his spirits were much better the very next morning, and he felt more like himself again. The angular monotony of "The Grange" had a depressing effect upon the spirits at any time ; and on this particular Christmas the Stubbs family, though they had, certainly, in some respects, disturbed the monotony, had caused discussions and provoked feelings which had rendered the family meeting by no means either pleasant or profitable ; and the Captain, glad to feel himself again his own master, congratulated himself upon his escape. He had escaped from his father's persecutions and his mother's entreaties ; and had also escaped from Miss Stubbs, and from the apparition which had haunted him for the last few days.



Our gallant friend was taking his ease in his *own* armchair before his *own* fire in his *own* hut. He looked round with a sleepy, lazy sort of satisfaction. He had finished drill, &c., and had nothing more to do for some hours, and an idea possessed him that as he had nothing to do which he was obliged to do, he would do nothing at all. Our friend was by no means an energetic character. Generally speaking, he was emphatically a lazy man, a self-indulgent man; and we suspect that half his satisfaction in his hut arose from the fact, that not only was he "monarch of all he surveyed," but could reach all he surveyed without the trouble of stirring from his chair, which idea, to a man of his disposition, was luxury itself. Hunting was his only passion: set him astride a good horse, behind a pack of hounds, and you would have some trouble in proving his identity with the innate specimen of humanity we have hitherto seen. The man who to-day would think it a hard day's work to walk from his hut to the club-house, would ride his forty miles, and come in, brush in hand, as fresh as a lark.

Captain Comptayne had no active vices: he was



seldom known to do any one any harm ; but still more rarely was he known to do anybody any good. He did not smoke.

The *Quarterly* aptly remarks " that the principal evil in smoking is that it renders vacuity of mind endurable."

Now, as vacuity of mind was the gallant Captain's normal condition, he suffered no inconvenience from it whatever. He could endure it unassisted, therefore he did not smoke, neither did he drink or gamble. His was a lonely life in the camp. His duty in the regiment was scrupulously (we had almost said mechanically) performed : so far he deserved the respect of his brother officers. He had few friends, for he was not a genial soul ; he was no companion for the intellectual, and was not rich enough to interest the others. The promotion of Major Beauchamp over his head had been a very sore point, and since then he had become more silent and moody than before. Every one must allow that there is no more mortifying a thing to a soldier than to see a junior exalted to the place where he fain would be, but for lack of money cannot be. Captain Comptayne knew it was worse than useless to ask his father's assistance



for that or any other purpose, as the Baronet had given his son pretty plainly to understand that money was a very scarce article with him at that time.

Captain Comptayne's annoyance was the greater on this present occasion, having heard of a very recent assistance which had been given to his younger brother to set him straight. He had gone down to spend the Christmas vacation at "The Grange"—a place for which he had no very fond affection—in the hope of being able to obtain a similar subsidy from his father, and to his vexation found not one farthing was to be extracted from the paternal purse; but that he, the eldest son and heir, was expected to sacrifice himself at the shrine of mammon to replenish the purses of the rest of the family. Very few young men prefer "committing matrimony" solely for the convenience of their fathers, mothers, brothers, or sisters; and Hildebrande Comptayne was not one of the plastic few, and he rebelled, as we have seen, to his utmost. Moved at last by his father's entreaties and his mother's tears, he yielded so far as to promise to enter the lists as a suitor, thinking that by those means he might increase his credit: at all



events he would gain time to lay his own plans, for marry Miss Stubbs he never intended.

We need not stop to inquire whether this was an honourable or gentlemanly course to pursue. It was what a scion of the house of Comptayne had decided upon; and that illustrious family are not accustomed to have the propriety of their doings questioned.

The gallant soldier had suddenly deserted the field of battle, and taken shelter in his hut at Aldershott. At Aldershott he luxuriated in his own peculiar manner for several days, and his countenance gradually assumed its usual *insouciance* and utter indifference to all around; when his servant entered one evening with a letter which a messenger had brought and left, saying that an answer would be called for the next morning.

Captain Comptayne detested letters: firstly, because they required answering; and secondly, because their contents were seldom of an enlivening nature. They consisted either of invitations, which he did not care to accept, to dull dinner parties or insipid dances, from anxious mammas and papas, who thought the heir of Comptayne Grange too good a chance to be lost; or else they

were bills, duns, reminders, gentle hints, &c. The one just handed to him was on the point of being thrown into the waste-paper basket, there to repose with many others of its kindred, when something in the external appearance made the gentleman pause ere he consigned it to oblivion. A second glance at the large, bold superscription rather startled him, and made him clutch it tightly in his hand, while he looked into the fire with a perplexed countenance. After a few minutes' cogitation he made up his mind to dare the worst and open the missive.

He read, and as he read his brow darkened, and clenching his hands, he more than once muttered, "What the deuce am I to do?"

Now, as we do not wish to introduce our readers into improper society, we shall not wait to hear what advice he received from his often apostrophised friend, but leave them to battle it out together, while we bid farewell to the camp and take the next train for Dover.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Oh, it was not there;
'Twas anywhere but there.
But he's not there: 'twas some one of the gallants,
With dress and stature like my Fazio.
Thou wert mistaken: no, no! 'twas not Fazio."

MILMAN.

"Now, Paulina, will you listen to reason?"

"Yes, to reason, but not to such nonsense as you have been talking for the last half-hour."

"I have *not* been talking nonsense, Paulina; I repeat, for the twentieth time, that I have seen him face to face, and, moreover, he saw me and recognised me."

"And, Ludovico, I repeat, for the twentieth time, that you must have been mistaken," replied Paulina. "Had my husband been in England, he would have come to me instantly—nothing would have kept him from me; but he is not in England, and I know he will not be in England before the end of next summer. You know as well as I do, Ludovico, that his ship is at Honduras."

"But Paulina, sister, I am firmly persuaded—"

"And so am I, my brother, firmly persuaded that you have made a mistake; so let us say no more about it. Oh, dear, there is baby crying! I must go and take him up."

"Do listen to me one minute, Paulina."

"No, indeed, I cannot, if you will say such things. It is very cruel of you, Ludovico, to tease me in this way. It is hard enough to be separated from my darling husband, without having to hear such things said of him. Please do not say so any more, but let me go on quietly till the summer, and then, when mio caro comes home, we shall be all so happy together! Oh, so happy! shall we not?" exclaimed Paulina, addressing a little black-eyed boy, who was playing with a wooden horse on the floor. "Oh, how happy we shall be, my cherub, when papa comes home!" And, catching the child from the floor, the young mother carried it off into the next room, to hide the tears which always would flow at the mention of her much-loved husband's name, and which symptoms of feeling had always the effect of exciting her brother's anger.

This conversation took place in the parlour of a

very second-rate lodging on the outskirts of Dover. The speakers were a middle-aged man and a very handsome young woman of about five-and-twenty, brother and sister.

A slight glance round the room was sufficient to show that these were no common people. Though very small and shabbily furnished, the apartment contained things one did not exactly expect to find in that locality. On a low horse-hair sofa lay a guitar and large piles of music, both in print and manuscript, of a well-worn and rather dingy hue; on a rickety table, which was propped up to maintain the steadiness essential to drawing, was a half-finished landscape, and all the appliances for water-colour drawing. Several highly-finished pictures stood against the wall, and gave token of superior talent in the artist, while something about either the touch or the subject proclaimed, to our ideas, that artist to be a woman. We were right in our conjectures. Paulina's were the fingers that executed, and Paulina's the brain that designed, these exquisite little pictures; but the air of poverty about the room and the dress of the occupants showed that, at present, her talent was unappreciated or at least ill paid.

This small place was the temporary home of Paulina and her two children. The brother *was* but a visitor,—not at the present time a very welcome one, for he came upon no very agreeable errand. He was a tall swarthy man, with piercing black eyes and a general appearance of foppishness in his dress, a countenance which portrayed many bad and uncontrolled passions, but over which a determined vindictiveness appeared to predominate. There was nothing honest-looking in his savageness; his was the furtive nature of the tiger. His sister dreaded him and quailed before him, while the most fretful infant *was* quieted to silence from sheer fright when he looked at it. It was an extraordinary and almost unprecedented event in Paulina's life to venture so plainly to differ from her tyrannical brother, as she had done in the conversation which opens this chapter; but her spirit had been fairly roused, and the southern blood that flowed in her veins had shown itself in maintaining her own opinion and vindicating the much-loved and absent husband. In terror for the consequences of what she had dared to say, she had hastily left her brother's presence and sought refuge with her children in another room.

Ludovico paced the parlour for some time in anger; and, after three times demanding from his sister whether she would return and listen to reason, took his coat and hat and departed, muttering curses and vengeance to himself, as he took the road to the railway-station.

When the door had shut upon her brother, Paulina timidly descended, bringing with her the dark-eyed cherub and a beautiful fair baby about three months old. She looked round the room, as if to satisfy herself that she was alone, and drawing from her bosom a miniature, pressed it to her lips and those of her children, and burst into a perfect passion of sobbing. The children, frightened, began to cry in concert, and to such effect, that the landlady appeared to see what could be the matter; and was just in time to prevent some serious accident to the infant, whom Paulina, in her agitation, could no longer hold with safety. Asking no questions, making no remarks, acting with a discretion most uncommon to landladies, the worthy woman soon succeeded in lulling the storm, and presently had the satisfaction of settling all three on the horse-hair sofa near the fire; and seeing the poor young mother quietly sobbing

herself to sleep, with her little ones nestling at her breast.

“Alack-a-day! what can be the matter with the poor lady?” remarked the landlady to her daughter. “I always have my misgivings when that great black man comes. I hope he does not take her money, poor thing, and gamble it all away: them furriners always do gamble. I am sure the poor dear works hard enough, and pays honestly for all she has; and a quieter body I never had in my house, since I took lodgers, than she is, when she’s let alone. And what beautiful pictures she do paint! I wish I could afford to buy one. And, then, how she does sing! I wish, Caroline, you would just creep up and see if she is awake, and ready for her tea, while I watch for the shrimp man; for I’ve a notion she’d like some with her tea to-night, as she eat no dinner to speak of, for I remarked all the bones were on his plate. I don’t think she could have eaten enough for a mouse, and that great fat baby to feed, bless her!”

In this most respectable kingdom of Great Britain, it is not considered at all “the thing,” or, at least, it is indicative of an unfamiliarity with the manners and customs of good society, to speak

to a person without a proper and formal introduction ; and though we much deprecate the system of looking out of the corner of our eyes, turning our back upon, or otherwise ignoring the presence of a stranger ; yet we, not wishing to be thought ignorant of the *bienséance* of fashionable life, think it incumbent to introduce, with all due formality, our readers to the lady who has thus suddenly appeared in our story ; and, having done so, we trust both the reader and the lady will travel quietly and sociably together during a few chapters.

Allow us then, most indulgent reader, to introduce to your favourable notice Mrs. Cumberland, the wife, and alas ! at present the “ lone widow,” of Lieutenant Cumberland, of the Royal Navy. These are the terms on which she presented herself to Mrs. Tooting, the landlady of No. 11, Swan Terrace, Dover. And, as we presume people generally know their own business best, we have taken the liberty of transcribing the above from Mrs. Tooting’s own book of household memoranda, which the worthy lady would no doubt obligingly show to any anxious inquirer after information.

Mrs. Cumberland was, as we stated above,

young, about twenty-five, and decidedly handsome, above the middle height, with a fine dignified figure. Her complexion was a clear olive, and might by some have been deemed pale; but her easily excited Italian blood mounted to her cheek too frequently for a person in conversation with her to think her pallid, though when in a state of rest, or deeply occupied, her appearance was almost statuesque. Her eyes were very dark, and generally mild and lovely; but offend her, chafe her, and a glance would flash from them never to be forgotten. Her face was shaded by a profusion of the softest and most brilliant black hair, which was wrapped round her finely-shaped head in a most becoming manner, but utterly in defiance of the prevailing mode. Her dress was of very homely material, and very plainly made, put on with very little attention to personal adornment. But Pauline required no ornament, and perhaps she knew it. She was a creature one sees but once or twice in a lifetime, but once seen, the recollection would be lasting.

This young mother had two children: the eldest, a boy of two years old, giving every evidence of southern descent; while the baby, a girl, was

fair and blue eyed, a thorough English child. Upon these children she lavished the fondest affection of her impulsive nature, and though careless of her own personal appearance when her husband was not near her, she clad her little ones in the daintiest manner, and provided them with the best of everything. Early and late she worked for them, and it was no toil to her.

Though the wife of a naval officer, Mrs. Cumberland was under the necessity of using her own talents for the support of her family, as the small allowance her husband was enabled to make her was quite inadequate to their wants. She had an exquisite voice, sang with taste, and might have realised considerable sums had she consented to sing at concerts, either private or public; but such an engagement would have separated her from her darlings for too long a period: she therefore contented herself with giving lessons on the guitar and singing in her own parlour; she also devoted all the time she could spare in painting in water colours, and had occasionally the good fortune to meet with an appreciating purchaser. But all this was a very uncertain income, and straitened means often cast a sad gloom over her countenance

as she looked at her children, and thought of the many months that must still elapse before she might have a chance of receiving her absent husband. Paulina had a brave heart, and was not easily daunted. She worked on and hoped on, and in company with her little ones time sped fast, and, on the whole, pleasantly.

When she roused from her heavy slumber, it was with the dull and leaden feeling always consequent upon a fit of agitation, and for some time she could scarcely remember what had happened. When she did recollect the stormy visit of her brother, it was only to resolve again to forget it; and busying herself in providing for her children's wants, Paulina was soon her own cheerful self again. Having disposed of her treasures in bed, she left them under charge of the good Mrs. Tooting, while she went to give a music lesson a few doors off. All this occupation completely turned off her thoughts, and she retired to rest as comfortable as usual.

A day or two passed in quietness. Mrs. Cumberland heard no more of her brother, and tranquilly pursued her daily work, when one evening, a rather imperative knock at the outer door having

roused the baby from its first sleep, she heard, to her surprise, footsteps, and heavy ones, mounting the stairs towards her apartment. She listened. It was Ludovico! No. She listened still, spell-bound as it were. Who was it? Who could it be? No! yes! It came nearer. The door opened. Paulina rushed forward, and was caught in her husband's arms.

* * * * *

Were we to attempt to give a description of the scene or the conversation that ensued between these two, we should only cover half our paper with dashes, which would not be very edifying to the reader: we will, therefore, just leave them alone until they have recovered their senses and their powers of speech; and, above all, until the children have been produced, have squalled in sleepy astonishment, been admired, examined, talked about, and finally put into bed again. Then the husband will have to be fed—husbands proverbially come home hungry,—so that, altogether, some time will elapse before we shall have any rational or instructive conversation to record. We will, therefore, just inquire what Ludovico has been doing with himself.

Ludovico, or Signor Zangarelli, as he is known in the musical world, left his sister's lodging in a towering and truly Italian rage; but against whom his violent anger was directed, he did not seem to know himself. He took the first train to London, went to his home, wrote a letter, then started for Aldershott, where he delivered it at its direction himself, and returned to the inn at Farnborough, there to await the answer, which never came. He again walked over to the camp, inquired for Captain Comptayne, was informed that that officer was not at home, that he had received leave of absence two days before, and was gone no one knew where. He had left no direction with his servant; in fact, no information was to be obtained from anybody about him. The only satisfaction the enraged Italian obtained was peremptory dismissal beyond the precincts of the camp.

We left Captain Comptayne in his hut reading a letter, and earnestly inquiring from a certain acquaintance of his, who shall be nameless in this polite society, as to what he was to do. After repeated adjurations, we may presume that the gentleman alluded to gave a satisfactory answer, for Captain Comptayne rose with something like



energy in his movements, and summoning his servant, desired him immediately to pack a small valise, and prepare to drive him to the Blackwater station in time for the next train to London.

Every one knows that Farnborough is the legitimate station for Aldershott; but Signor Zangarelli having requested the answer to his mysterious missive sent to Farnborough, Captain Comptayne concluded that he must be there waiting for it; therefore, to avoid a meeting which he did not desire, our friend determined to dodge the Italian, and reach London by another route. Thus, when the Signor inquired at the camp, his bird was flown.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Moments there are in life, alas how few!
When, casting cold prudential doubts aside,
We take a generous impulse for our guide,
And follow promptly what the heart thinks best."

SOUTHEY.

"He then besought me, for some little space,
The nuptials might be secret: many reasons,
He said, induced to this; I made no pause,
But, resting on his prudence, to his will
Gave absolute concurrence."

MASON.

UNLESS our readers are persons of far more moderate capacity than any for whose amusement we should care to exert ourselves, they will have discovered, from the concluding paragraph of the last chapter, that Captain Comptayne, of Her Majesty's gallant regiment of Blank Cartridges, was identical with Lieutenant Cumberland of the Royal Navy. It would, therefore, be utter waste of time to use any personal description of the gentleman who entered Paulina's lodgings at so untimely an hour of the night, and pressed that black-eyed lady so warmly in his arms. But

though the dress and person of Paulina's husband need no further notice; yet the countenance and even tone of voice were so changed, that it would have been a matter of some difficulty for a merely casual observer to identify the one gentleman with the other. The lazy indifference and open-mouthed vacuity had given place to animation, and his dull sandy-coloured face beamed with eagerness and affection. His lips, forgetful of their habitual drawl, asked fond questions and used endearing epithets towards wife and children with wonderful celerity. Thus, though the two were one, they were in thought and action as different as black and white; and the inhabitants of Comptayne Grange would never have acknowledged, even if they recognised, the heir of the house.

But in order to establish this double identity to the satisfaction of all parties, we shall be obliged to retrograde a few years; and account for our friend Hildebrande's proceedings during the period which intervened between the scene in the Manchester pastrycook's and his appearance in the assembly-room at Oddborough.

The regiment of Blank Cartridges left Manchester soon after the encounter of the four officers

with the old gentleman in the white beaver, and the recollection of the whole affair had faded from their minds. Part of the regiment went abroad, and the rest remained in depot at Greenwich. Young Beauchamp, who obtained rapid promotion, thanks to an invisible friend, was among those who left England; but Captain Comptayne, who only obtained his company in a natural manner, after much waiting, remained at home. Owing to his position as heir to a title and an entailed estate, his society was courted, and his lazy dulness endured, for the sake of his expectations. His society was by no means an acquisition in any circle, as he hated dancing, and rarely spoke; but the theatre and opera were his delight,—he was never backward in accepting an invitation to accompany any one to an entertainment of that sort. It was just after his heart: he could lean back in his seat, and look and listen, and be amused, without the slightest exertion on his own part, which state of being was to him elysium. From repeated visits he soon made acquaintance by sight with the principal artists; and having been once persuaded to accompany a friend to the green room, soon became a constant and welcome

guest at some of the leading theatres, especially at the opera-house.

He then fell in with the brother and sister Zangarelli. The former was one of the great voices of the establishment, and realised a considerable sum each season. Paulina, though possessing a splendid voice, was far too timid to be entrusted with more than a minor part. Their father had been a singer; but from a strain, in consequence of over-exerting his voice when suffering from a cold, had contracted a chronic and incurable asthma, and had fallen to the rank of a scene-shifter. Owing to his health, he was almost dependent upon his daughter for support, his high and mighty son taking no notice of him. Occasional glimpses as she passed behind the scenes—for Paulina did not rank high enough to be admitted into good society among the actors—had persuaded Captain Comptayne that she was the loveliest being he had ever seen. Her beautiful figure, and her shy, modest, but brilliant black eye, had completely fascinated him. He was over head and ears in love with the charming singer. But no advance to acquaintance could he make with the coy maiden: she sung her part, and inva-

riably retired with her aged father, never waiting to mingle with the loungers, and never giving any one the opportunity of addressing her. In despair at ever being able to obtain a word with his enchantress, the young soldier applied to the brother for a formal introduction, which was promptly and flatly refused. He then had recourse to the poor wheezy old father, and, by dint of considerable assiduity, was rewarded at last by becoming on speaking terms with the lady.

From that day Captain Comptayne determined that Paulina Zangarelli, and no other, should be his wife. We ought to have remarked sooner, that with the knowledge of the prejudice of his family for all below their own standing, combined with the desire of not being traced behind the scenes by his brothers and acquaintances, he had introduced himself to the Zangarelli family as Lieutenant Cumberland of the Royal Navy; and, as his affection for and determination to marry Paulina gained upon him, he thought it expedient to continue his alias. For he well knew the storm he might expect were his engagement to an actress, the daughter of a scene-shifter, to become known to their high mightinesses his father and mother. Not having

been reared with any very distinct ideas of right and wrong, he saw no harm in his deceitful proceeding. Hildebrande loved the fair Italian with far more sincere affection than might have been expected from one of his apathetic temperament, while she clung to him with all the ardour and passion inherent to her southern origin. They were pledged to each other, to the great delight of the old father, and their intercourse was almost daily; but, as yet, no time had been fixed for their nuptials, as he said his stay on shore was so uncertain he might be summoned to join his ship any day, and then it would be difficult for him to know what to do with his wife. Loving him entirely, she trusted him and was satisfied.

Captain Comptayne's reason for delaying his marriage was in reality (for we must do him justice) a far better one than he confessed to. From the beginning of his attachment to Paulina he had resolved that his should be no clandestine marriage: if he could not persuade his family to approve the connection, at any rate they should countenance his wife; and he intended that she herself should gain the cause. His plans were not very definitely arranged; but the idea floating

in his mind was, that he would contrive, in some way or other, an introduction between his sisters and his lady-love, concealing the real circumstances of the latter; and the Captain felt certain that her artlessness and beauty *must* fascinate these high-born dames as entirely as it had him; and the acquaintance with his family once begun, all that he desired *must* follow, as a matter of course, and he should lead the lovely Paulina to the hymeneal altar in St. George's, Hanover Square, surrounded by a circle of admiring friends.

But all this was destined not to be. The father Zangarelli was taken worse one evening, and on the next day, when Hildebrande called to inquire for him, he was dead, and Paulina alone in the world! Alone; for though she had a half-brother, both old enough and rich enough to take the necessary care of her, yet he peremptorily refused to notice her unless she would give up her engagement to Mr. Cumberland, whom he designated as a beggar. Many men of rank had admired her, and many a more brilliant establishment might have been at her service, if she had not been so coy and foolish; and now, to throw herself away in marrying a poor officer, was madness itself.

Left as the poor girl was, utterly unprotected and friendless, and Comptayne knowing that it would be useless to attempt exciting any commiseration for her desolate state from any lady of his family, decided upon marrying her at once; and the ceremony was performed in St. George's-in-the-East in a very private manner.

After the month of aberration of intellect, which is always considered to follow upon the marriage ceremony, yclept the "honeymoon," had passed, and reason had again resumed her sway, our hero began to suspect, though as deeply attached to his wife as before, that, as far as worldly matters were concerned, he had done a foolish thing; and to mend it and provide for Paulina was what he did not exactly know how to do. He had not revealed to her who he was or how he was situated, as he did not like his wife to imagine that she could be otherwise than welcome to any family; he therefore kept up his story, representing himself without kith or kin. Paulina's ignorance of the manners, customs, and almost the language of England, prevented her discovering the many discrepancies in his tale, which would have been perfectly

apparent to any one else. Warmly attached to him, and grateful for his protection so opportunely afforded in the midst of her affliction, she implicitly believed all he chose to tell her, and pliantly yielded to all his wishes. Thus, when he had settled her in Mrs. Tooting's little lodging at Dover, and informed her that he was summoned to join his ship, which was on the eve of sailing for the West Indies, she believed him; and though deeply grieving for his departure, cheerfully entered into all his plans and arrangements for her comfort during his absence. Money, as we know, was a very scarce article in the Comptayne family, but he honestly gave her two-thirds of his income, reserving for himself barely enough to support him in the necessities of life.

After the birth of her first child, Paulina found it necessary to do something for herself; and with the landlady's assistance soon was able to derive some little profit from her accomplishments. She had now lived at Dover for three years, and her talents were known and appreciated. Very frequently her husband spent a week at a time with her, but generally confined himself

almost entirely to the house under plea of sickness. Had Paulina known anything of naval matters, he would have found it rather difficult to account for his frequent visits; but she knew nothing, suspected nothing, and was not of a particularly reflecting turn of mind: she took things as they came, and was thankful. She was not skilled in worldly wisdom; she was simply a trusting, loving woman, believing a'l that was told her, and never asking inconvenient questions.

“What a paragon of a woman!” we hear some one exclaim. “I thought, Mr. Author, that you professed to have nothing to do with *perfection*. And what is a woman who never asks an inconvenient question, but the very idea of perfection?”

Well, sir, we can only say, that we had no intention of writing down Paulina as perfection; but if you or any one else choose to think her so, you are quite welcome to hold your opinion,—we shall not quarrel with you for so doing.

Paulina's perfections, as you will have them, stood her in good stead; for they enabled her to

pass three years of her married life undisturbed by anxiety. Of course, like an affectionate wife as she was, she felt her husband's frequent absences, and would have liked to have had more of his company; but she was satisfied that things could not be otherwise, and was grateful to him for all his kindness. When Captain Compayne parted from his wife the last time, he gave her to understand that she would not see him again for some months, as the voyage he was going would be a longer one than usual; for the truth was that he wanted a little time to arrange his plans for the future, and to bring about a satisfactory introduction of his wife to his family; and he went down to "The Grange" to see what he could do, intending to make Beatrix, who was, he thought, the most rational of his sisters, his confidant. But on his arrival home, he found matters in the condition which we endeavoured to describe a few chapters back. To break his own private affairs, he soon saw would be worse than useless, especially when he heard the plan that was laid for him; and though he found, to his surprise, that his parents were advocating a plebeian connection for him,

yet it was apparent that the chains that were to bind him must be gilt, and double gilt. It was no time for him to come forward and offer for their acceptance a daughter-in-law whose sole merits were her beauty and goodness. A marriage with Miss Stubbs would at any time have been repugnant to him, for he was a connoisseur in beauty, and would have rebelled at being tied for life to an ugly woman, even though her "black pudding" were incased in gold. As it was, Sally Stubbs was nothing to him; and he did not take the trouble to discover her mental beauties, but at once took a determined dislike to her. So weary was he at last of the scenes in his father's study and his mother's dressing-room, that he finally decided to appear to yield obedience to their wishes. How he did it we have seen; and now we have explained his private position, the reader will no longer be surprised at his curious behaviour. Knowing that his wife thought him at Honduras, he felt quite safe, and gave himself up to do what his weak nature would not allow him openly to rebel against.

What, then, was his horror to discover, on the

night of Mr. Stubbs' concert, in the grand tenor, Signor Ludovico Zangarelli, the half-brother of Paulina,—to find that, not only did he see him, but, in spite of his precautions, was seen by him and watched by him with an astonished and savage eye! The Captain's dread of an explosion was extreme, and in his terror and excitement he did, for him, an almost unprecedented thing—got tipsy and offended Miss Stubbs. Haunted by the dread of the Italian's reappearance, he unceremoniously took his departure from "The Grange;" and buried among the multitude in Aldershott Camp, thought he was safe for the present, and that he should have time to consider what was next best to be done. For he knew that a thorough explanation with Paulina would now be necessary, as he was convinced, from the vindictive nature of Ludovico's mind, that he would lose no time in visiting Paulina and poisoning her mind; or, if not quite that, of distressing her mind with regard to her husband, whom Zangarelli hated with all the intenseness of his fiery nature. But not long was he fated to remain undisturbed, for on the third day after his arrival a letter from the Italian was put into his hand.

CHAPTER XX.

"But principles in Edmund's mind
Were baseless, vague, and undefined ;
His soul, like bark with rudder lost,
On passion's changeful tide was tost ;
Nor Vice, nor Virtue had the power
Beyond the impression of the hour."

ROSEBY.

"And, therefore—since I cannot prove a lover—
I am determined to prove a villain."

RICHARD III.

OF all people in the world, a man likes least to be lowered in the opinion of his *wife*. She may treat him with coolness, may even show her hatred to him, but he cannot endure a manifestation of contempt on her part. Captain Compayne was like other men in this respect, and was deeply apprehensive that when Paulina came to know all she would despise him, which he was conscious of deserving : he loved her most dearly, and felt that contempt from her would break his heart. He, therefore, determined at once to visit her, to find out exactly what her amiable brother

had told her, and how she felt towards him, her husband; and also to make some arrangements to prevent a premature disclosure to his family, as he knew that Zangarelli would never rest until he had done him all the mischief which lay in his power.

Hildebrande arrived at Dover, and the enthusiastic reception which he had met with from his wife, and her entire silence regarding her brother's visit or anything else unpleasant, made the Captain imagine that Paulina knew nothing more about him than he had told her himself, and that Zangarelli's letter was all a string of nonsense. The next morning, when he sat by Paulina's side with the eldest child on his knee, and watched her completing a drawing for which she had received an order, he revolved in his mind whether he should speak to Paulina upon the tiresome subject, or leave her in blissful ignorance for a little while longer—in fact, until he had quite settled his plans, and arranged for an exchange into a regiment abroad; for, stand any more scenes at "The Grange" he determined he would not. Thus the two sat silent for some time—she too busy in touching up her picture and rocking the cradle of

the sleeping baby with her foot; and he vainly trying to extricate himself from one of those labyrinths into which people, who once deviate from the path of simple truth, are sure, sooner or later, to find themselves—when suddenly Paulina looked up with a beaming smile, and said,—

“Oh, carissimo! how little did I think three days ago, when Ludovico was trying to frighten me, that I should so soon have the delight of seeing you here at my side! It seems quite like a dream!”

“Has Ludovico been here lately? You did not tell me that news, dearest!”

“Ah, well! I had forgotten all about him, for the sight of you made me feel so happy that I had no time to think of anything disagreeable: and you do not care about him, you do not like him, caro! and he did not make me very happy with his visit, I can assure you.”

“Why, what did he do to frighten you, petita?”

“Oh, he had got a foolish story; but I was not going to believe it, and I told him so. I will never believe any stories against mio carissimo sposo,” said Paulina, throwing her disengaged arm

around his neck, and drawing down his face to level with her own.

"But tell me, won't you, what he said? repeated Hildebrande, thinking, as she had been told something, he had better find out what, and settle the matter at once.

"Oh, it was such stuff! not worth repeating. He must have been tipsy at the time, and I told him so. He will persist that he saw you at the concert, where he was singing in Oddshire, and that you were going to be married to a lady with a great deal of money; and he said"—here Paulina stopped, turned red, and hid her face on his shoulder.

With all the firmness he could command Captain Comptayne pressed her to him, and repeated, "And he said what, love? tell me all he said."

With some hesitation Paulina, still hiding her face, continued,—“And he said that your name was not Cumberland, and that I was not your wife, only—you know what; that we had never been married—it was all a pretence; and he said a great many other dreadful things; and he made me so angry that we had a quarrel; and

I answered him; and then I was frightened, and ran out of the room, telling him I did not and I would not believe a word he said. After storming about, finding I would not go downstairs again, he went away, and vowed that he would be revenged on you. I can't think what put him in such a temper! He made me feel quite ill all the day after. But I did not believe it, *carissimo*; and now you are come I am 'happy—oh, so happy! and I will not think any more about him;" and she nestled closer to her husband, and they remained silent for some minutes.

At length a deep sigh from Hildebrande roused Paulina, who, looking up, saw his face was ashy pale, and starting up in alarm, exclaimed,—

"*Carissimo, carissimo!* are you ill? oh, speak! what is the matter?"

He did not answer her for a few moments, but groaned heavily, and she looked at him in speechless amazement; then rising quickly did this affectionate woman produce from her little store a bottle of wine hoarded carefully for treats or emergencies, and pouring out a glass insisted upon his drinking it. In a short time Hildebrande recovered his presence of mind sufficiently to be

aware that he had frightened his wife, whose pale and anxious face attracted his attention : he hastily jumped up, placed her upon the sofa, and administered to her the same cordial she had so lovingly pressed upon him. Sitting beside her in a caressing attitude, trying to hush the baby, who had been awoke by the stillness of the cradle, and petting the little boy, who had climbed on his knee, the Captain remained for some time in perfect silence, and then determined to do a wise thing,—to tell his wife his whole history, and throw himself entirely upon her mercy and generous love.

Perfectly satisfied that she was truly and lawfully his wife, and that nothing could untie the knot which bound them to each other, it was astonishing to the more worldly mind of her husband how remarkably coolly Paulina took the rest of his revelation. In any one else, his wife would have been one of the first to censure the slightest deviation from truth and openness ; but Hildebrande was her husband, and it never seemed to occur to her simple mind that it was possible for him to do wrong.

What an awful responsibility was laid upon this

man, who had thus inspired this trusting woman with so absorbing an attachment that his every action, when viewed through the medium of her love, appeared faultless, and his very vices became invisible to her sight !

In his mention of his family circumstances, and in the reasons which he gave by way of explaining his own actions, Hildebrande dwelt far more upon the *poverty* than the *pride* of his parents, thinking that Paulina would understand that better, and that it would not be so great a shock to her feelings to know that the principal fault for which her husband would be blamed by his father would be for marrying a penniless bride, and not one of low degree. It would be a difficult thing to make his wife, whom he considered peerless, feel that she would not be considered as fitting company by the members of his family. In placing the matter in this light before Paulina, though it was scarcely the correct one, he ought not to be blamed ; it was so natural under the circumstances, and what any man of delicacy would be apt to do himself. But all Captain Comptayne's punctiliousness was wasted, for his wife paid no attention whatever to that part of his story : she was revolving in her

mind a hundred little schemes for assisting him, and preventing his feeling the burden of supporting her and his children, and was thinking how many things she might do to comfort him, and show how anxious she was to obey his wishes in everything.

The Captain, though surprised at her behaviour, which he could not understand, felt relieved, and was glad that he had confided all his troubles to her, and now dared his tormentor, Signor Zangarelli, to do his worst with Paulina, of whose affection and fidelity he was more than ever certain. His spirits rose, and he threw himself, heart and soul, into arrangements for his wife's benefit. He had little difficulty in persuading her that it was better she should hold no communication for the present with her ill-tempered half-brother; in fact, that she had better conceal her whereabouts entirely from him. Having no affection for Ludovico, and dreading the mischief he might do, she was easily persuaded to leave Dover, and in the course of a few days she had relinquished her pupils and other engagements, and with her two children, accompanied by their father, was on the way to Boulogne. Here, in a quiet and retired

lodging, on the outskirts of the town, Hildebrande left her to join his regiment, and make arrangements for an exchange to one then at Corfu, where he intended taking his wife and children, after announcing the fact of their existence to his father, and formally giving up all claim to the hand and fortune of Miss Stubbs in favour of his brother Hugo.

These were his plans, and, meditating upon them, we again find him seated before the fire in his hut at Aldershott.

Meanwhile negotiations for the exchange did not advance as quickly as the Captain wished, for he was obliged to keep the matter a secret, not wishing his intentions to reach the ears of his father or any of his acquaintances, as he did not intend the explosion to take place until he, who lighted the fusee, should be at a safe distance out of harm's way.

Captain Comptayne was essentially a soft young man; his mind took its colour from the circumstances and associations of the time being. In company with the pure and simple-minded Paulina and his innocent children he was the tender, loving, good-natured husband and father.

At "The Grange" he imbibed the pride and prejudice of his family ; was cynical, lazy, and selfish. With his regiment he kept himself aloof, and was a misanthropical, ungenial soul. For a short time after his return from Boulogne his domestic feelings retained their influence over him, and even his messmates felt the difference ; but soon his usual worries again beset him. Accounts from "The Grange," as regarded money matters, grew worse and worse, and creditors began to dun him. Like, we must admit, most young men, and following the custom of his forefathers, he had, before his marriage, contracted debts which were still standing, and since his marriage, though he practised the strictest economy in his own personal expenses, yet he had been obliged to visit "Uncle Moses" more than once on the strength of his expectations, as heir to "The Grange," to procure a few extra comforts for his wife and children. All these were accumulating, and he saw no way of extricating himself from his difficulties ; and, in the present state of his father's exchequer, he despaired of ever procuring the money for the purchase of the majority, which was to set him free of England and enable him to provide for his family abroad.

This was the height of his ambition, and one for which he would willingly have sacrificed a great part of the entailed property. But Sir Hildebrande was, if possible, in a worse strait than his son, and could not, if inclined, have given him the least assistance; therefore it was perfectly useless to apply. All these worries soon robbed Captain Comptayne of his cheerfulness, and he sank into a state of utter despondency, from which he was roused by a letter from Paulina, begging to know what he had decided upon for her to do.

What the deuce was she to do? What the deuce was he to do? What the deuce were any of them to do? were questions which took Captain Comptayne some hours of moody meditation before they were answered. Having, we presume, again received counsel from his friend, who shall be nameless in this society, he came to a determination quite worthy of his adviser—namely, to accept the invitation, which he held in his hand, to a party at the temporary abode of Mr. Stubbs, in Westbourne Terrace. He would go up to London, appear on every possible occasion in public as the escort of Miss Stubbs, and industriously circulate a report of his engagement with the



heiress. By this manoeuvre he calculated that he should increase his credit, and eventually find no difficulty in obtaining, from some accommodating "Uncle Moses," the sum he required to purchase the majority; and then, once safe out of the country, he might either snap his fingers at his creditors, or pay them at his leisure.

This charming little scheme he at once proceeded to put into execution by despatching an acceptance of Mr. Stubbs' polite invitation, and sending word to Beatrix that it would be his supreme will and pleasure to occupy his own bedroom in Park Lane on the following Saturday.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Where finds Philosophy her eagle eye,
With which she gazes at yon burning disk
Undazzl'd, and detects and counts his spots?
In London. Where her implements exact,
With which she calculates, compares, and scans
All distance, motion, magnitude, and now
Measures an atom, and now girds a world?
In London. Where has Commerce such a meal,
So rich, so thronged, so drained, and so supplied?
In London:—Opulent, enlarg'd, and still
Increasing London!"

COWPER.

MR. STUBBS and his ladies, together with most of our acquaintances in Oddshire, had removed to London for the season. Sir Hildebrande Compayne and Sir Arthur Beauchamp had been summoned there by Parliamentary duties, both enjoying the confidence of their county in an almost hereditary manner. The former baronet was no very great acquisition to that august assembly, as when he did join the sittings, which was but seldom, he rarely spoke, and did not often appear to take the slightest interest in the proceedings of the session, unless some subject was advanced which threat-

ened in any way to militate against the privileges of the aristocracy. To his seat in Parliament Sir Hildebrande owed his present inexperience of the Fleet. We are not supposed to mean that he ever had a chance of forming one of the Admiralty Board, or had ever an idea of being "First Lord."

To his colleague had, by mutual but tacit consent, devolved the task of watching over the welfare of Great Britain in general, and Oddshire in particular; and Sir Arthur did it, as he did everything else he undertook, in a straightforward, hearty, gentlemanly manner.

In following his friends to London, Mr. Stubbs was not actuated by any desire to enter into the fashionable world; for though determined to mix with his neighbours on terms of equality in the country, he knew better than to attempt doing so in London. Mr. Stubbs went to town in order to see everything that was new himself, and to show Sally all the wonders; he went to imbibe a fresh set of ideas, and to rub off a little of the rust which is so apt to accumulate upon the "all-the-year-round" country gentleman. He wished to introduce to Sally, and make her intimately acquainted with, all the principal works of art in

the metropolis. He took her to the theatres, the opera-house, the concerts, the flower-shows, the parks, and the reviews. He thus showed her people of every sort and of many nations; and, by introducing her to the studio, the school, and the hospital, her wise old uncle brought under her knowledge life in all its varied circumstances. All these different amusements and sights, judiciously applied and sagaciously commented upon, were calculated to improve her mind, cultivate her taste, and give her heart something to meditate upon.

Mr. Stubbs had the happy knack of making useful and desirable acquaintances, not in a worldly sense, but in a rational one. When a sight was to be seen, he always contrived to secure the companionship of *the* person, no matter his or her rank, who was likely to introduce them properly, and to explain to them in the best manner all objects of interest; to inform them *why* such and such things had always been admired or valued, or upon what grounds others were expected to stand the test of succeeding generations.

Fully aware of the absence of all personal attraction in his heiress, Mr. Stubbs' most anxious

wish was to make her independent of them, and to store her mind with objects for reflection ; to show her that there were other and far more substantial forms of happiness than those derived from the possession of beauty and a train of admirers. Now, Sally had admirers enough, it was certain ; but she had sufficient discrimination to know that they admired the length of her purse, and she despised them accordingly. She knew perfectly well that she had not the slightest pretension to comeliness. The Misses Beauchamp, with whom Sally had been in such close companionship, were all pretty ; and in their society, surrounded as they always were by looking-glasses, Sally could not fail of being constantly reminded of the contrast.

Naturally amiable and sweet-tempered, in common life all this would have had no bad effect upon Miss Stubbs ; but being the acknowledged heiress of a wealthy man, she attracted so many suitors for her favour, that her eyes were thereby opened, and her disgust excited. Thus Sally, in spite of her good disposition, from sheer force of circumstances was fast becoming cynical in her ideas and repulsive in her manners. Too young

and too inexperienced in the ways of the world to discriminate, she was beginning to condemn all alike as fortune-hunters, and, in her humility, to imagine that no one noticed her but as heiress to the wealthy Mr. Stubbs. Lady Harriet Beauchamp was the first to make this discovery, and communicated her suspicions to Mrs. Davenport, who, after a little observation, quite agreed with her ladyship, and drew the attention of Mr. Stubbs to the matter.

Mr. Stubbs, though rather cynically disposed towards all the fortune-hunters himself, had the good sense to see that it was not a feeling which should be encouraged, in so young a girl especially, and he became aware that his "fixed idea" must not be carried out at the expense of Sally's heart and mind; he, therefore, originated the plan of a London season, being anxious to give her something else to think about to divert her mind, and prevent her dwelling upon her own personal deformity, or the bad side of human nature as presented in the shapes of her numerous admirers. The scheme answered well, and Sally soon threw herself into all the delights by which she was surrounded, and in the daily enjoyment of

rational amusement quickly forgot herself; and the consciousness of ugliness ceased to betray itself upon her countenance. In conversing with the clever and intellectual, Sally soon found the level of her mind, and was often surprised at the deference with which her opinions were received by men old enough to be her father; men, in fact, whom she could never associate with the idea of suitors.

Few, very few ladies would acknowledge to themselves, however much they may laugh and joke about it to others, that their *sole* attraction is their purse. However apparent the contrary may be to bystanders, they have always a lurking idea that it is for themselves *alone* they are worshipped, and that their wealth is only a pleasing accompaniment to their persons. This is female nature in general; and it is as well that it should be general; but Miss Stubbs was a variety—she had too humble an opinion of herself, and too exaggerated a one of her personal appearance. The words “disgusting object” were constantly ringing in her ears; and she fancied that her uncle’s money alone prevented her hearing them repeated in every society. Behind her back she was cer-



tain they were always coupled with her name. This was a morbid unwholesome feeling, and one which Mr. Stubbs had unconsciously encouraged ; but which, as soon as he was made to understand the mischief he was doing, he set about to counteract in the judicious manner above mentioned, and succeeded.

Mr. Stubbs took a comfortable house in Westbourne Terrace ; and, though he did not mix with the Court circle and ultra-fashionables, was soon surrounded by a very pleasant little coterie, composed of the wise and the witty, the clever and the agreeable. The parties and conversaziones given by him were conducted with good taste, and well attended ; invariably including some celebrity, whom professed party-givers would have given their little fingers to be able to attract. Everything was arranged in a simple unostentatious manner, without display or pretension. Sir Arthur Beauchamp was a frequent and most welcome guest, being glad, he said, to escape from the fashionable crushes to friend Stubbs, where he was sure to meet some one worth speaking to, or hear something discussed worth listening to ; and he took every opportunity of introducing his

county neighbour to those of his acquaintance who would appreciate him.

At a dinner given by Sir Arthur, trade and commerce being the topic introduced, after the departure of the ladies, by some member of the Cabinet then present, Mr. Stubbs was appealed to by his host, and gave some valuable information upon the point in dispute; and made such pertinent remarks upon the state of things then existing, as to attract considerable attention, which procured for him many flattering overtures of acquaintance in Ministerial circles.

While our friends of "The Gorses" are thus enjoying themselves we must not imagine that Captain Comptayne was forgotten: far from it; he was repeatedly (unknown to Sally, though) invited to these pleasant parties. Mr. Stubbs had not quite done with him yet, and had not the slightest intention of hindering his court to the heiress. But the Captain had hitherto declined all the hospitalities of Westbourne Terrace; being, as we have seen, engrossed in his own domestic affairs, and the "Manchester man" began to fear lest he might have quietly received his *cong  * from Sally, and closely questioned Mrs. Davenport on

the subject. That lady, being pressed for an answer, explained to Mr. Stubbs the offence that his niece had taken at Captain Comptayne's behaviour on the night of the concert; and expressed her conviction that Sally would find it very hard to be even commonly civil to him again.

Mr. Stubbs was here a little 'puzzled how to act without compromising Sally's dignity. He was sure, from the increasing civility of Sir Hildebrande, that he had not given up all idea of catching the heiress; and knew, from good authority, that a few thousands of ready money were becoming every day more necessary to the Comptayne family. He determined not to relax in his invitations to Captain Comptayne, whose anxiety on the score of money would make him overlook the fact of the lady's coolness; and many notes were sent to him and others of the regiment at the same time. At last his patience was rewarded; and Captain Comptayne signified his readiness to be present at a dinner and an evening party—we know why.

Before sending the acceptance, Hildebrande satisfied himself that there was no chance of Signor Zangarelli making his appearance, for

though he had made all straight with Paulina, and was under no apprehension of her brother doing him any mischief in that quarter, he did not much fancy a personal encounter with his fiery temper, particularly at this delicate juncture; as he knew that the explanations with which he had pacified his wife would not appear so clear to her worldly-wise brother.

Having laid his plans, Captain Comptayne repaired to London to reduce them into practice; he found the doing so would cost him very little trouble. Mr. Stubbs covertly gave him every opportunity he could desire; and Hildebrande found himself constantly in the company of the heiress, though it was little notice she deigned to take of him, and she certainly gave him nothing that any other man, less intent upon the business, could have construed into encouragement. For this coolness the Captain did not care: his aim was to *be seen* constantly in her company, and he cared not for the amount of conversation that passed on the occasion. To be her companion in public, and to contrive that her name should always appear near his in the lists of fashionable company, was quite enough for his object; he did not want the

lady, neither did he wish for the trouble of saying pretty things to her. He simply wished that the few pence which his pocket contained should be gilded for the time by the reflection of her charms; and that their intimacy should be observed by the people most likely to repeat it to those who had at present the control of his moneyed interests. His endeavour was to mystify the world, without in the very least compromising himself. He wished others to understand that the heiress was his private property, without having it in their power to say that he told them.

Captain Comptayne played his part well, and his credit was rising in consequence; but Sir Hildebrande and Lady Comptayne were far less cautious, and by their impatience had very nearly spoiled the excellent work of their hopeful son. It was not long ere, by their instigation, a paragraph appeared in a fashionable morning paper, announcing, among the matrimonial *on dits*, that "an alliance was hinted at between a certain wealthy heiress and the eldest son of one of the most important members of the baronetcy, who had also the honour of representing a division of one of the midland counties."

This rather startled Captain Comptayne, as he felt the announcement to be premature ; and he feared that the report, combined with self-gratulations of his parents, would disarrange the whole affair, by making that a serious engagement, which he never intended to be more than a temporary accommodation.

Oh ! the vanity of the man ! He thought that he had nothing to do but ask and he should have !

On the whole, Captain Comptayne was satisfied with the general aspect of things, and let all this have time to work before he applied, either directly or indirectly, to "Uncle Moses," well knowing that his chance of success in that quarter depended greatly upon his apparent freedom from all anxiety. As soon as he did begin to throw out feelers, he found that Mr. Stubbs' credit was so good that, as his nephew-in-law *in posse*, he should have no difficulty in obtaining an advance. But delay occurred in another quarter, which had not entered into his calculations,—namely, the Horse Guards. The money which he wished to raise upon the strength of his matrimonial prospects was ostensibly for the liquidation of long-standing bills, and the satisfaction of clamorous creditors ;

but, in reality, for the purchase of the majority in a regiment stationed in foreign parts. This latter arrangement it was necessary to keep a profound secret in his own breast,—firstly, on account of the creditors, who would not easily be made to understand why their accounts should not be settled first; and, secondly, it would not do for sharp-witted “Uncle Moses” to discover that the gentleman he was to accommodate intended to fly the country immediately. And, besides all this, no one was likely to advance money with that knowledge of his intentions, as it would not be very rational to suppose that a man on the eve of marrying an heiress would wish to exchange into a marching regiment. A great deal of manœuvre was necessary to prevent the whole affair from getting wind, and Captain Comptayne, not being very clever at that sort of thing, was completely bewildered.

There was a rumour in Ministerial circles that Parliament was upon the eve of dissolution, and in that case Sir Hildebrande would no longer enjoy any personal protection from his creditors, and a crash at “The Grange” might be expected.

There was also a rumour that the independent

electors of the northern division of Oddshire had lately tasted of the tree of knowledge; and in consequence discovered that Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, Baronet, was an unprofitable representative; and they had some idea of pleasing themselves for the future in the return of persons to serve them in Parliament. A millionaire was mentioned as a likely man, and the county would be contested. Sir Hildebrande had no money to stand a contest, and not popularity enough to gain many votes without it. He knew this quite well, and began to tremble when the rumour reached him.

In short, affairs at "The Grange" began to look more black than ever.

CHAPTER XXII.

"If we examine impartially that estimate of pleasure which the higher ranks of society are apt to form, we shall probably be surprised to find how little there is in it, either of natural feeling or real satisfaction."—HENRY MACKENZIE.

OUR knowledge of the manners and customs of London life, fashionable or otherwise, is too limited to permit our describing with correctness the details of the various *réunions* in the different circles. Our readers must therefore pardon our passing somewhat hastily over the campaign of the season. From what we have heard of the proceedings which are called pleasure, we fancy we have reason to congratulate ourselves upon our ignorance; and wish we could persuade some mammas and misses to join with us in thinking that on this point "ignorance is bliss." We are anxious to replace our actors in their own county, where, if they would only confess it, they are far more comfortable and happy than when roasted, dusted, and stifled in the metropolis.



This London season, in particular, passed off as London seasons generally do. The average number of balls and routes were gone through; the average number of healths were ruined; the average number of weddings were arranged; and the average number of young ladies returned on hand. All *our* friends found themselves settled in Oddshire under very much the same circumstances as they left it, the engagement of the two eldest Misses Beauchamp being the only variety; but as they are, though very pretty, of no particular consequence in this story, we shall not pause to dilate upon the merits of their respective *fiancés*. Suffice to say, that Sir Arthur expressed extreme surprise when he found that his consent to her marriage with Sir William Templar was anxiously wished for by his eldest daughter, whom he had considered as virtually affianced, for many years, to his nephew Harry. But when he could be brought quite to understand that Harry was in no way wronged—that, indeed, as Miss Beauchamp hinted, Harry's thoughts were turned elsewhere, the Baronet cordially acquiesced in the arrangement; though candidly owning his disappointment in the failure of his own plan for his daughter's hand, a plan

which, if he had chosen, he might have seen, as others did, was never likely to be realised.

Captain Comptayne had suddenly disappeared from the side of Miss Stubbs; and, considering the encouragement to retain his post there which he received from Mr. Stubbs, his actions were most unaccountably mysterious.

Mr. Stubbs, who was not often surprised at anything, and who laid his plans, in general, with such nice precision and deep calculation, founded upon his knowledge of the world and human nature, began to fear that he should be baffled; and to suspect that there was something in the background for which he was unprepared, and which, consequently, had not entered into his calculations. We know there was.

A favourite theory with our "Manchester man," and one upon which he turned all his actions in plan-laying, was this:—"When you transact business with a man, or lay a plan having relation to other persons, make allowances for the tempers and various imperfections of human nature, as you would, in shooting at a mark, allow for the wind; at the same time taking into consideration your own fallibility, as the archer directs his aim

according to the steadiness of his hand ; and these points carefully arranged, a good marksman is tolerably sure of a centre hit."

According to this rule Mr. Stubbs had acted, with regard to the Comptayne family, in all his intercourse with them ; and after carefully studying the idiosyncrasy of those eccentric individuals, imagined that he had discovered the mode of managing them, and that time alone was wanting to make all sure. He was therefore rather disappointed to find that, as the time for action approached, things were not taking exactly the turn he expected, and that he had not quite got the length of Captain Comptayne's foot. Sir Hildebrande appeared as anxious as ever, and had even gone so far as to hint the desirability of the match pretty broadly ; and Mr. Stubbs further knew that the distresses of the Comptayne family were increasing, and the election was certain to be a considerable drain upon his already scanty purse. But what was the Captain about all this time ? Was he really a better man than Mr. Stubbs imagined him to be ? Mr. Stubbs was puzzled.

The fashionable world had not troubled itself much about Mr. Stubbs and his heiress, whom

they seldom met in their own circle. Mr. Stubbs was nobody in London: he knew it, but did not feel at all annoyed by that knowledge. He had no ambition to be a fashionable man, or to move in fashionable circles. His money was nothing particular in London, where nobody knew anything about their neighbours' affairs, or cared either, provided they gave parties. The fashionables heeded little whether the furniture was paid for or not,—whether the greengrocer or the bailiff handed round the champagne or called their carriages. It was only to a very small circle that Mr. Stubbs' real wealth was known; few knew the great expectations of his very plain niece, and those that did know were also given to understand, by Sir Hildebrande's mysterious nods and winks, that the lady was already an "appropriated blessing."

Though the Comptayne family did not rule in London with the same supremacy as in Oddshire, yet many did yield to them, and they contrived to get pretty much their own way. Sir Hildebrande and Lady Comptayne having, by their whispers and winks, certified that it was their will and pleasure that the heiress should marry their son, it was considered as a settled thing; and, though

every one wondered greatly how it came to pass that the exclusives had condescended so much as to tolerate such an alliance ; yet, as people in the whirl of fashionable life have not much time for astonishment at the doings of other people, the affair excited little notice. Sir Hildebrande's eldest son was simply set down in the list of detrimentials, and Miss Stubbs, as Miss Stubbs, was deserving of no attention at all. When she returned to London for another season, the case would be quite different : she would then be Mrs. Comptayne ; she would have both a town and a country house ; she would give parties, and then her acquaintance must be cultivated ; but until then she was only "waste of time."

Owing to all this byplay, Miss Stubbs' train of admirers was very small, as few thought her personal attractions to be worth the trouble of entering the lists against one of the proud Comptaynes, and she was permitted to enjoy herself without much molestation. And enjoy herself Sally did. She made plenty of agreeable acquaintances, and saw everything that was worth seeing in the best manner, rejoicing in her freedom from the persecution of fortune-hunters, but totally ignorant to

what she owed her emancipation. Her uncle's judicious treatment did her all the good he intended it should. Sally's mind recovered its healthy tone, and her spirits their elasticity; she left off thinking of her want of beauty, as the powers of her mind developed themselves; she found her remarks listened to with attention by recognised savants and litterati, and her remarkably retentive memory often appealed to in a flattering manner. All this gave her confidence in herself; and, before the London season was over, Miss Stubbs discovered that a lady may be admired and liked for many other things besides personal beauty.

Had Sally found out that she might be loved for anything besides her money? It were premature to answer that question.

CHAPTER XXIII.

“Nothing more easy than to gain access
To men like these, with his polite address.
So he succeeded, and first look’d around
To view his objects and to take his ground:
And therefore chose awhile to sit.
Then enter boldly by some lucky hit,
Some observation keen or stroke severe,
To cause some wonder or excite some fear.”

THE DUMB ORATOR.

“If I may make so bold, would you please to tell us if there be any news to-day, sir,” asked Timothy Diggins, British yeoman, of a personage of the genus “gent,” who sat opposite to him at the farmers’ ordinary, in Oddborough, one market-day. The stranger appeared so much more intent upon the newspaper than the boiled beef, as to excite the attention of the speaker. “I beant much of a schollard myself, sir, I beant; but I loikes to hear how things is going along.”

“No excuse is necessary, sir. I am happy to be able to oblige you. A dissolution of Parliament may be immediately expected.” This latter sentence was uttered in a distinct and unneces-

sarily loud tone by the "gent;" but it did not appear to cause the excitement he evidently expected it would.

"A 'solution of Parliament beant much in our line, sir, it beant; thanking you kindly all the same," replied farmer Diggins. "Its the proices as will suit us best, it is. How's the wheat and the mangles, sir? and what is the pigs adoin? Is dead pigs a looking-up a bit again? its high toime they did, it is. They have been mighty low this good while, they have. 'Cause if so be they're a rising in the market this week, whoi, I'll have the butcher down upon mine in the morning, I will; and they shall be all up in the barn by their heels afore night, they shall. I tell you, sir, I've down at my little place twenty-five as fine hogs as anybody ever set their eyes upon, I have; and all asking loike for a man to kill 'em, they are."

A discussion of some minutes ensued among the assembled farmers, touching the merits of their respective porkers, in which the stranger took no part; but as soon as there was a lull, in consequence of replenished plates, he observed in a loud tone,—

"I should have thought that a dissolution of

Parliament would have been particularly interesting to you gentlemen ; as I suspect you all possess county votes, and consequently have the power of choosing your own representative. You can send any man you choose up to Parliament, can't you ?”

“We does not trouble our heads about such matters, we doan't ; we leaves them things to the gentlefolks ; 'tis none of our business,” returned a farmer. “We has our two barrowknights, we has ; they looks after our Parliament business. They always has done it, and, I suppose, they always will ; there beant no call for us to bother ourselves about what doant consarn us.”

“You are very fortunately situated, gentlemen, I am sure,” replied the stranger, blandly ; “I quite envy you your happy circumstances. I am an entire stranger in these parts, and did not know but that you might be just as anxious to get good prices for your crops, and have some of your taxes taken off, as the farmers are in some of the neighbouring counties, where I have been visiting lately. But a contented spirit is an excellent thing, gentlemen, and one not often met with in this troublesome world. I repeat, I quite envy

you your position." And the "gent" returned to the perusal of the paper and the demolition of a fresh helping of boiled beef and suet-pudding; taking no apparent notice of anything beyond. A bystander might not have felt quite so certain that he was as engrossed by his twofold occupation as he seemed to be; for a certain twinkle of the eye and pricking up of the ear betrayed that he was capable of doing more than two things at once.

After considerable muttering, and loud whispering among the bucolic consumers of beef and pudding, one, apparently more courageous than the rest, inquired of the stranger,—

"Your pardon, sir, I'm sure, for interrupting you; but did you really mean that some of them taxes is to be done away?"

"Indeed, sir, I cannot exactly say that they will be repealed, but I hope they will. It entirely depends upon what sort of men are returned to Parliament this next election. The new Parliament will be a great struggle for liberty: those that don't want to pay taxes any longer had better be looking sharp about them, and give their votes to those men who will promise to get them taken

off. Pray, who has the honour of representing you gentlemen in Parliament ? ”

“ Sir Arthur Beauchamp and Sir Hildebrande Comptayne be our members, and both be barrow-knights,” replied Mr. Diggins.

“ Oh ! indeed ! I wonder how they voted in the late division ; perhaps you can inform me what their political feelings are ? ”

“ For sure, sir, I don’t know nothing about those sort of things ; I got the farm I holds under Sir Hildebrande when my father died nigh upon twenty years ago, and I always votes the same as he did, and I never asked no questions. The gentlemen sometimes asks me after my wife and family, but I should never take the liberty of inquiring after their feelings,” said another farmer, rather gruffly.

“ Oh, I beg your pardon ; I only wished to know on which side they voted—whether they are Whigs or Tories. But I have a little book here which tells the manner in which every member has voted throughout the session. I wonder whether we shall find the names of your members among them.”

(The stranger turned over a manuscript book,

and searched among its leaves for some minutes, while the farmers conversed in an undertone, and the word tax was frequently heard in their discussion.)

"Oh, yes; I have it at last, gentlemen; here is Sir Arthur Beauchamp. A clever speech on game-laws, corn-laws, and church-rates; but he voted against these being repealed. Income-tax, property-tax—ah! I see; no friend to the farming interest of the county."

"I don't care one rush how Sir Arthur votes, or what he does in Parliament, I don't. I'll never vote agin a Beauchamp as long as I live, I won't. The Major saved my little wench from being drowned in the mill-pool, and I'll never go agin a Beauchamp in anything, I won't. I'd cut off my head if it would do any of them any good, that I would, as sure as my name is Diggins."

"Sir—Mr. Diggins—I admire your sentiments; they are those of a gentleman, sir; and I am truly glad to find an English yeoman that can in these hard times afford to vote for his friends—can afford to pay the taxes that are being heaped upon us every session; it speaks well for the prosperity of the land" (here Diggins winced, for farmers do

not like to be told they are rich); "but, as I have my little book, we will just see for curiosity's sake how the other gentleman has been conducting himself" (and the stranger had again recourse to his pocket-book). "Ah! I do not see his name down among the speakers. I think this honourable member is not given to expressing his opinions in company. Upon my word, here is a note to that effect, stating that 'this gentleman has never opened his mouth all the years that he has sat, except upon the prerogatives of the baronets of the United Kingdom.' A capital representative! an active man that! Ah, well! perhaps it is better that a man should hold his tongue if he has nothing to say.

"But how does he vote? That is the grand point, after all. Let us look. In favour of the duties on sugar, starch, leather, corn, &c. &c. Sir Hildebrande Comptayne voted for game-laws, corn-laws, for admitting baronets into the House of Peers, and permitting the families to style themselves Honourable. Ah, well! an uncommonly useful couple of members you have, gentlemen, I must say; and you Oddshire farmers are deuced lucky fellows to be able to afford such a

luxury. I wish you would spare us poor town-folk a little of your stray cash to pay the everlasting tax-gatherers. I really think you ought, as you will not help us to get rid of them. It is not at all fair in you. Good morning, gentlemen; I must be about my business. Thank you for your very agreeable company. (To the barmaid.) 'My dear, can you change me a sovereign? Good day.'

And the loquacious stranger strode away from the Comptayne Arms.

After the departure of the stranger, silence prevailed for some minutes; and most of the company looked as if some new but not very pleasant idea had been raised up in their minds. At last one farmer ventured to remark in rather an undertone,—

"A talking chap, that; I wonder if all he says be true—about them taxes especial."

"I'm sure I doan't know, and I'm sure I doan't care," grunted another. "Where be the use of our bothering ourselves about things we cannot understand?"

"I'm sure I don't know; but I think I do care," said a younger and more intelligent-looking man, with a manner and appearance above his fellows.



"I don't see why we should pay all these heavy taxes and church-rates, and have game-laws, and all those sort of things, if we can any ways help it. And you see the gent says that it is all our own fault: we don't send the right persons to Parliament to see them all done away with."

"Now, hould your tongue, lad, can't ye, and moind your own business; the man does well enough; and I'll never vote agin a Beauchamp," exclaimed friend Diggins, with warmth.

"Nor I! nor I!" said a dozen more.

"Well, Sir Arthur is a good man, I'll agree; and I should not like to do him an ill turn; but still, with six little ones to feed and clothe, I could do with the taxes off. Suppose," resumed the young man, thoughtfully, "suppose we spoke up civil to Sir Arthur about the matter, maybe he'd get all the taxes taken off in a quiet way."

This idea was esteemed a most brilliant one by the audience, and received with vociferous applause; and after a little more discussion, it was agreed that Sir Arthur should be addressed on the subject the first convenient opportunity.

The name of Sir Hildebrande Comptayne was feebly mentioned by one of the company, who

timidly suggested that it would be necessary to ask the same favour of him, as it would be no "manner o' use one filling the tub while the other emptied it."

"You *are* right there, Thompson, for sure," exclaimed Diggins, bringing his fist down on the table with a smart bang,—"*you are* right enough there, my lad; but who would be the man of us to do it? who would think of going up to the Grange and asking to speak to Sir Hildebrande? Whoi, I don't know what he'd say to such impudence; for we never can get a civil word from him nohow at any time, even about the turmits or the crops. I'd sooner speak to the Queen or the Prime Minister, if I comed across 'em, than speak fust to my landlord, that I would."

"I never say a word to he sin he took up my lad for just catching a rabbit," muttered another yeoman.

"I've a great mind to get my missus to mention it next time she goes to the Grange with her bill," remarked a true son of Father Adam. "Her bill ain't a little one now, by no means. They foine folks owes us a sight of money for poultry and oats. We sends in our account regularly every

quarter, but have not seen the colour of their money these seven years. I'll make her speak about them taxes, that I will."

Though Mrs. Diggins was known among her numerous friends and acquaintances to possess remarkable powers of speech, combined with a free use of her tongue when she considered the occasion demanded a demonstration on her part; yet the company did not feel very sanguine of her success on this subject, and were even doubtful if she could obtain the audience necessary for the display of her powers of oratory.

The farmers talked and mused over their gin-and-water for some time longer; but it is worthy of observation, that since the daring proposition had been made of venturing to hint to Sir Hildebrande Comptayne that they, the farmers of Oddshire, wished him to do something that neither he nor his forefathers had ever done—i.e., consider the interests of the people in general, and their constituents in particular,—it was worthy of observation, we say, that when the delicate subject came under discussion, the tone of conversation subsided into a hushed and most mysterious whisper: furtive glances were cast at the doors

and windows, and one individual—he of the valiant wife—even went out to make sure that the barmaid was not within earshot; so nervous were they all, each man feared being caught, each felt guilty of high treason.

With a slight variation of apparel, this group of stalwart yeomen of the nineteenth century might have been depicted as the contrivers of the Gunpowder Plot, in the very act of hatching that memorable conspiracy. So completely had these men been born and bred under the Comptayne dynasty, that each one was impressed with the idea, that to breathe a thought against the supremacy of that reigning power was tantamount to high treason, and punishable by the law of the land. They had been brought up in fear and dread of the Baronet at “The Grange,” who was a severe magistrate, a hard landlord, a bad customer, and a disagreeable unapproachable neighbour. He had always been in Parliament since they could remember; they had never inquired what he did there. In fact, though the yoke galled them, they never had imagined for one instant that it was possible to emancipate themselves.

Nor did they now even, as they sat and whis-

pered, realise any power in themselves to alter the state of things. They were simply extremely uncomfortable. They fancied that they ought to do something; that something was expected from them. What was that something?

The worthy yeomen of Oddshire were in exactly the condition their new acquaintance intended they should be.

If the reader has ever had anything to do with electioneering, he has by this time surmised the trade and calling of the talkative stranger; and does not require to be told that this "gent" was what is called a Government agent, sent down to investigate the state of feeling in the northern division of Oddshire, and to discover what chance there was for the return of one of their own supporters. Government, who soon find out everything of that sort, knew that Sir Hildebrande Comptayne had no money to stand a contested election, and they fancied his popularity was not sufficient to keep him steady; and it was to unseat him that they intended exerting themselves. Against Sir Arthur Beauchamp they would not try their strength. He was a man liked by all parties—a man of sense and substance; to fight

him would be an expensive, and in all probability a bootless enterprise.

But could the popular faith be once shaken regarding Sir Hildebrande; could some one be encouraged openly to rebel against his thralldom, he would stand but a poor chance. The ice once broken, the standard of liberty once unfurled, and hundreds would, at first furtively, but soon honestly, flock around it. The first act done, the people once rebels, they would fight for their lives, as they would feel that to surrender would be certain death—there would be no mercy for them.

Sir Hildebrande lived not in the hearts of his neighbours or dependants. The deference with which he was treated, the bows and curtseys with which he was greeted, were the effect of fear, not respect; and the general anxiety among the children to get out of his way and clear the road for him, showed that the name of Sir Hildebrande Comptayne was used as a family "bogy" to frighten the rebellious into order.

The Government agent soon found this out; a very few hours sufficed to show to his experienced eye the state of public feeling towards both the

sitting members. He said but little, but contented himself with scattering small pieces of the leaven of discontent, as in the case of the farmers, and then, leaving them to leaven the whole lump, he returned to town.

The leaven did its work surely; and, though no one confessed their feelings the one to the other, yet it was very evident that something had taken place materially to discompose the people and unsettle their minds: they looked restless and fidgetty, but taciturn, as if afraid of trusting themselves to speak, lest what was uppermost in their minds might ooze out; and they might find themselves in the Tower of London, with their heads beneath the axe before the next morning.

The tax-gatherer, hitherto regarded as a necessary nuisance, was now met coldly, and eyed suspiciously.

The young farmer mentioned above walked through the streets daily, in the hope of again meeting the stranger, with whom he earnestly desired a little private conversation.

Some of the tradesmen, when the doors were closed, just cast their eyes down their books, to



see how the account stood between them and the baronet at "The Grange."

Never was there so great a demand for newspapers in Oddborough before.

Verily the leaven was working.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Nay, then, farewell!
I've touched the highest point of all my greatness,
And from that full meridian of my glory
I haste now to my setting. I shall fall
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,
And no man see me more.

HENRY VIII.

SIR HILDEBRANDE COMPTAYNE, Lady Comptayne, and the three Misses Comptayne returned from London immediately upon the conclusion of the season: they did not follow their acquaintances to the Continental or British watering-places; for alas! they had no money for those sort of amusements, and were obliged to make a virtue of necessity, and return to spend the residue of the year in their own mansion among their own people.

The old lumbering family coach, with its broad escutcheons, panels, tawny liveries, and with the four-horned griffins on every conspicuous situation, was proceeding through the streets of Oddborough at a pace more con-

sonant with the dignity of the honourable house to which it belonged, than the dash and prance which in Comptayne eyes spoke "parvenu." No doubt the wheezy old horses, who had entered their fourth lustrum, were of the same opinion, and did their best to support the family dignity in that particular.

The carriage contained in one corner Lady Comptayne half asleep; in another Sir Hildebrande shrunk as far back as possible without quite getting into the sword-case, and, according to his invariable custom, never looking out of the window, or taking any notice of the salutations of the townspeople. He lay back with folded arms, knitted brow, and puckered mouth, not looking like a very amiable old gentleman. A third corner contained Miss Comptayne, who had returned after another (we will not rudely guess how many she had gone through previously) unsuccessful season; and who, in the present instance, was vainly endeavouring to swallow her defeat and conceal her surprise, as an elegant britska and four greys dashed by them, just allowing her to catch a glimpse of the smiling, happy face of the beautiful Lady

Blake—the city bride. Wrapped in her own thoughts, and apparently well satisfied with herself, Abigail occupied the fourth corner; and though hungry, thirsty, dusty, and tired with the long journey on that sultry day, she did not seem impatient of their slow progress; but was quite content to believe that she was travelling as a Comptayne ought to travel. Beatrix, the lively Beatrix, sat between her sisters, a little in advance—in other words, rode “bodkin.” It was not a comfortable position by any means; yet it was one she disliked as little as possible, for it enabled her to see all that was passing without incurring the reproofs of her seniors for the plebeian trick of looking out of the window—curiosity as to external things and persons always giving dire offence in this exclusive family.

On this occasion, the perfect silence of her never very talkative sisters gave Beatrix more leisure for her remarks, which were, though intended chiefly for herself, tolerably audible to the rest of the party.

“How Mrs. Sampson’s baby is grown! The poor man that had his leg cut off in the hos-

pital seems to walk famously with his wooden one. What a number of smart caps and bonnets Miss Wilkinson has got in her window! I wonder what has become of the Coopers,—the shop is shut up! Dear me! Blake for ever! Blake and liberty! No taxes! Cheap bread! Down with the Comptaynes! Dear me, I wonder what all that means! It is written on all the walls, Judith. Do look how droll it is," exclaimed Beatrix, in unaffected surprise.

Before Judith could comply with her sister's request, Sir Hildebrande had started forward, and, with a glance, comprehended the whole thing. The cry from groups of ragged urchins of "Blake for ever!—no Comptayne!" smote on his ear, as, livid with rage and astonishment, and muttering "Curse the fellows!" he sank back on his seat.

Beatrix, alarmed at her father's sudden change of countenance, roused Lady Comptayne, who drowsily inquired, "What is the matter?"

"You will know soon enough: curse them! they will take care you do," muttered the Baronet through his set teeth; and, putting his head out of the window, he gasped a command to the coach-

man to drive faster ; but, his voice being drowned by the shouts of the street boys, the servants did not hear. The Baronet, perhaps becoming aware that the condition of his stud was such as to preclude obedience to the order, did not repeat it. He drew in his head quickly, but not so quickly as to prevent his seeing a knot of tradesmen—his tradesmen—men whom he patronised, whom he honoured, by using the contents of their shops, and permitting his, Sir Hildebrande Comptayne's, name to stand on their books—grouped together on the pavement talking. They did not appear to notice his equipage or himself, but continued their conversation unabashed. Not a hand was raised to hat ; their faces were turned in a contrary direction. The enraged Baronet vowed that he would no longer deal in the shops of those impudent scoundrels ; but the next minute reflected, that the cessation of his custom would immediately cause the presentation of a little account, and necessitate the payment of it—an arrangement not highly convenient under existing circumstances,—so he very wisely said nothing on the subject.

Sir Hildebrande continued crouched in his

corner, and the ladies remained quite silent—Beatrix intently, though furtively, watching her father until they reached the grand gateway to “The Grange,” when the Baronet, having apparently roused himself for the effort, again looked hastily from the window. Allowing for the advance of the season, all was the same as he had left it; and the first glance seemed to satisfy him, for with a sigh of relief he murmured, “They are still here.”

Yes, they—which meant the oaks—were still there in all their beauty, casting their shadow far and wide, and giving shelter to the numerous herds of cattle collected around their stems. They were still standing, but the Baronet knew that the purchase-money for them had already passed through his pockets; they no longer owned him as their master. Why did they still stand as if in mockery of him? Was the fact that they stood as usual a good sign or a bad one? Sir Hildebrande felt, though he would not own it, that it was a bad sign.

Arrived at the grand entrance, which was always used upon the occasion of the annual return of the family, Sir Hildebrande, never very communicative

to his dependants, on this day was more curt than usual in his reply to the civil greetings of the old butler; and pushing his way past the servants, entered his study, when hastily shutting the door, as if fearful of being followed, he bolted it, and tottered to his armchair. There he crouched rather than sat with his hands pressed tightly over his eyes, as if to shut out some hideous sight. But press as he would, poor old gentleman, those white chalk figures, so badly spelt, would dance before him; and, as if they exercised a species of fascination over him, he could not prevent himself repeating, "Blake for ever! Down with the Comptaynes! Blake and liberty! Cheap bread! No taxes!" &c. &c.

In the vain hope of chasing them away, and trying to convince himself that they were only the vision of a disordered imagination, the result of worry and over-fatigue, Sir Hildebrande sat up after a while, and turned to examine the numerous letters which were carefully laid in order upon his writing-table. A single glance at them sufficed to startle him, for he at once guessed the nature of their contents. Very few bore the head of Her Majesty on their right-hand corner: they had not

come far; they were not letters of friendship; and still less did they look like notes of invitation. What were they, then, to make the perspiration stand in dewdrops upon the clammy forehead of the miserable Baronet? He felt that he knew, yet dared not approach them to make "certainty more certain." They served to confirm the spectre that danced before his eyes; they proved its stern reality. They showed that the averted glances in Oddborough were not the effect of an ideal or a fancy of his fevered brain.

In an agony Sir Hildebrande tore open the envelopes, and found, as he suspected, that every tradesman in the county who had any account of long standing against him had sent a gentle reminder thereof.

Bills at this time of year boded ill!

The Baronet paced the room, almost bereft of reason, with clenched hands and foaming mouth, till, exhausted by his passions, he sank into his chair. He would have rung for wine, but feared to be seen by his butler, and to have his worst fears confirmed by the man's countenance. How the miserable man longed to know the extent of the evil, and yet clung with the tenacity of a

to his dependants, on this
 than usual in his reply to the
 old butler; and pushing
 entered his study, where
 as if fearful of being
 tottered to his arms
 rather than sat with
 his eyes, as if
 But press as
 white chalk
 before him
 fascinate
 repeat
 Com
 No
 At last, worn out by his excitement and sus-
 pense, Sir Hildebrande rang the bell and desired
 that some food might be brought to him; as he
 felt, in his present nervous state, that he could not
 endure the tedium and formality of a regular
 dinner, with the servants staring at him, and, per-
 haps, covertly laughing at the remarks Beatrix was
 sure to make about all she had observed in Odd-
 borough. Lady Comptayne, fearing that her
 husband might be ill, applied at the door for
 admittance, which was resolutely denied, and

her ladyship was obliged to retire with the information that he was not ill, but only very tired, and did not wish to be disturbed by anyone.

However, Sir Hildebrande soon changed his mind on that point; and despatched a note to his man of business in Oddborough, requesting his attendance. This note, he flattered himself, was so worded as to conceal any anxiety on his (the Baronet's) part for an interview; and, leaving the time to the attorney's discretion, merely stated that he wished to see him at his convenience.

Poor Sir Hildebrande! Poor man! he thought to postpone the evil hour: he was as loth to fix the time as the culprit, who hopes for reprieve, is to drop the fatal handkerchief.

But Mr. Parkinson, who had been awaiting with some anxiety the command which was to summon him to his patron's side, was on the road to "The Grange" the minute after he received the note; and in the Baronet's presence long before that gentleman had made up his mind what he wanted with him, and what he intended to say when he did come. Sir Hildebrande was just in the condition of the fractious child who, having been coaxed into saying that

it will be a good boy, and allow the dentist to pull out his tooth, *when he comes*, finds, to his consternation, that, instead of having an hour or two to wheedle his mamma and change his mind, the operator is just outside the door, ready to enter the very instant that his reluctant promise has been extorted—and, *nolens volens*, he must submit. Thus, just as Sir Hildebrande had persuaded himself that it was quite impossible for the attorney to come that night—he might not be at home—he might be eating his dinner—at any-rate it would take him some time to dress—he never would enter his (Sir Hildebrande's) presence in his office-coat and with unwashed hands—no; if he did come that evening it could not be for three or four hours, at least,—so consoling himself, the Baronet tried to settle in his armchair, drowsy from the effect of his excitement and a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, when, to his annoyance and surprise, Mr. Parkinson was announced, and the attorney walked in with the profoundly deferential manner which he knew pleased his patron, and which was designated by his acquaintances “Parkinson's Grange manners.”

A few words descriptive of the man of business

may not be misplaced. Mr. Parkinson was a tall, lank individual; that is to say, he would have looked tall if he had held himself up, but an habitual cringing gait and a want of self-respect had bent his spine to a considerable curve, while an awkward manner of cocking his head on one side had contributed to reduce his stature. He was thin, out of joint, with splay feet and immense hands; his face was sallow and closely shaven, overshadowed by a profusion of straight dust-coloured hair, which he was in the habit of keeping clear of one eye with a comb; his eyes were large, and protruded, but his glance was keen; and his mouth betrayed reticence regarding his own affairs, and perhaps those of other people when they made it worth his while. The countenance of this unprepossessing-looking man indicated talent and shrewdness; and he talked a good deal about his conscience, without which communication, on his part, his enemies were wont to observe, "No one would have been aware that he possessed anything of the kind."

On this occasion, in spite of his speedy appearance at "The Grange," Mr. Parkinson was scrupulously dressed, as that was a point much

insisted upon by Sir Hildebrande, for having felt certain that he should be summoned to appear as soon as his patron arrived, he had been attired in his best, ready for a start, the whole afternoon. Mr. Parkinson knew, perhaps better than his master, what he was wanted for, and though, on his entrance, his countenance expressed wonder and humble curiosity at the hasty summons, he saw at a glance all that was passing in Sir Hildebrande's mind.

The house of Parkinson, father and son, had been hereditary attorneys for the hereditary baronets of Comptayne for some generations. They had made the characters, countenances, and voices of their several employers a matter of study; and, as they had invariably possessed the greater amount of brains on their side, had generally contrived to manage matters much in their own way. The Parkinsons knew all the family secrets, and let out or kept them as suited their own interest.

"Knowledge is power" is now proverbial, and most especially applicable to the knowledge of secrets and weak points.

A rapid glance round the apartment, on his

entrance, had put Mr. Parkinson *au fait*, and made him master of the occasion. He read his patron's countenance, and correctly guessed the nature of the papers scattered on the floor and writing-table; he knew what the Baronet wanted to ask him, and would not assist him in the least. After making his bow, he stood, a mixture of stolidity and demureness, about six yards off.

Sir Hildebrande fidgetted nervously, not knowing what to say first, and wondering how long the stupid fellow meant to stand there, silent and grinning; though at any other time he would have indignantly resented the bare idea of the attorney daring to utter a word before being spoken to. He felt the keen eye upon him; he fancied a shade of defiance lurked in its glance. Unable to endure this mute observation any longer, the Baronet growled out,—

“Sit down, can't you, Mr. Parkinson.” (Sir Hildebrande always gave their full titles to those he considered his inferiors.)

“Sit down!” muttered the attorney to himself, in surprise. And sit down he did. But it took a minute or so for the obsequious man of law to decide, among the variety of furniture, upon a seat

humble enough for his occupation ; and also, when the choice had been made, to determine the exact relative position that his seat ought to bear with regard to that of the Baronet. In these demurs Mr. Parkinson prolonged the agony of his master, and he knew it. He and his ancestors had not suffered from the concentrated pride of a race of Comptaynes, without causing him to feel intense satisfaction whenever it so happened that he could safely retaliate.

At length, master and man being relatively situated for the convenient despatch of business, the awful moment could on no pretext be further delayed, and the Baronet was obliged to drop the handkerchief.

“So, Parliament is dissolved, Mr. Parkinson?”

“Yes, Sir Hildebrande.”

“Does Sir Arthur Beauchamp mean to stand again, Mr. Parkinson?”

“Yes, Sir Hildebrande.”

A pause ensued. “Why the deuce can’t the man say something more than ‘Yes?’” muttered the Baronet to himself.

“Is the writ come for the new election, Mr. Parkinson?”

"Yes, Sir Hildebrande."

"Is the day fixed for the election, Mr. Parkinson?"

"Yes, Sir Hildebrande."

"Deuce take the fellow! Why does he not speak out? I must make him enter into particulars, or I shall go mad," was Sir Hildebrande's aside.

"For what day has the Sheriff fixed the election, Mr. Parkinson?"

"The *nomination*," laying a great stress on the word, "is fixed for Tuesday the twenty-seventh of August, Sir Hildebrande."

"The twenty-seventh! Oh, that will suit my arrangements very well, Mr. Parkinson," returned the Baronet, with a ghastly attempt at a smile. "Lady Comptayne had fixed the twenty-eighth for our expedition to Switzerland."

Now, Sir Hildebrande Comptayne had about as much idea of going to Switzerland as we have, or you have, reader, of going to Timbuctoo: he was only taking the bearings as he went along, and the attorney knew it. We would caution most gentlemen of not very strong understandings, not to trust too much to the density of their

motives, as such confidence oftener betrays the density of their brains.

“The *nomination* takes place on the twenty-seventh, Sir Hildebrande, but it is expected that the election—the polling—will be a two-days’ affair;” and the attorney pretended to examine the state of things externally, not liking to meet his patron’s eye after this announcement, though furtively keeping a side-glance to see how he bore it.

The Baronet’s face, white before, turned green as the fact to which he had resolutely been shutting his eyes for some days past was thus rudely thrust under his notice. He could no longer pretend ignorance; he must face it as he could; he must talk the matter over; he must confess to his man of business—though the man knew it long ago—what a matter of life and death it was to him; he would not let Mr. Parkinson see that he was startled; he would treat it as a matter of course; he would pretend to have known it all along. So, giving himself both a mental and bodily shake, he sat up in his chair and said, in what the innocent man considered a supremely indifferent manner,—

“Well, I do not see how that is to interfere

with my plans. Sir Charles Blake will never be foolish enough to demand a poll, and the whole affair will be concluded in one day, as usual. There will be a little more speechifying than we are accustomed to, but that will be all. Her ladyship need not put off her journey."

The last sentence was uttered in a species of half-interrogatory, as if expecting an answer in the negative. Mr. Parkinson paused a little, and then replied, weighing well each word as he uttered it, but not looking his patron in the face,—

"Certainly, certainly, Sir Hildebrande, there is no reason that her ladyship should derange her plans; but it will be considered necessary that you, as one of the candidates, should be near the spot until the conclusion. You see, Sir Hildebrande—this—will—not—be—*quite*—a—common case. In fact, you see, Sir Hildebrande, a *little* opposition may be expected."

"It will be all very well, Mr. Parkinson, for Sir Arthur Beauchamp to be on the spot; but I see no necessity for *my* putting *myself* out of *my* way for anything of the kind. My seat is quite certain. I and my ancestors have *always* sat for Oddshire, and we always shall."

"Certainly, Sir Hildebrande, certainly, sir,"

said the attorney, at a loss what else to say, for he did not like to venture upon contradicting his master in his present temper; yet he knew that if anything was to be done towards securing the election it must be done at once. Sir Arthur Beauchamp was safe, all acknowledged, and the contest would be between "The Grange" baronet and Sir Charles Blake. The latter had already got the start, and an immediate canvass on their part was imperatively demanded. But how was he, Mr. Parkinson, to propose such a thing as a personal canvass to Sir Hildebrande Comptayne, Baronet—ask him to go round to each elector begging for their "support and interest at the next election," saying civil things to all men, and

"Shaking hands with all, however dirty their paws,
And remembering 'tis all for the good of the cause"—

how could he, the attorney, ask him to do this? And yet it must be done, or their seat would be lost—that seat, the full value of which he perhaps knew better, realised better, than his weak-minded master. We consider Mr. Parkinson was an object of pity as he sat confronting Sir Hildebrande, but with his eyes fixed upon the muddy water in the moat just outside his window, and turn-

ing over in his mind the best way, the safest way, to do the unpleasant task he had to perform. At length, turning towards Sir Hildebrande, who had been sitting silent for some minutes, as if expecting him to make some observation, he said,—

“It seems to me, Sir Hildebrande, that it would be as well for you to permit me to have your address to the electors printed and circulated at once; and perhaps you would not mind coming into Oddborough to-morrow morning, and talking the matter over with a few of your supporters.”

“What do you mean, Mr. Parkinson? My address to the electors you will take care is sent to the *Oddborough Mercury* in the usual manner, and at the usual time; and as for my going into Oddborough, and ‘talking the matter over,’ as you please to suggest, I never have done such a thing, and never intend doing such a thing. You seem to forget who you are speaking to?”

“Indeed, Sir Hildebrande,” resumed the attorney, waxing bolder with the emergency; for though Mr. Parkinson had no personal love for the Comptayne family, and intended to give them up altogether on the earliest opportunity, yet in the matter of the election he had no wish to be on

the losing side, and would strain to his utmost for his own sake—"indeed, Sir Hildebrande, you must please to understand that on this present occasion it will not be quite sufficient for us to do as we used to do. It will not answer for us to keep quiet; we must exert ourselves a little. You see sir, there never was any opposition before as there is unhappily now."

"Opposition! why, the man is crazy! No one would think of opposing me. The opposition, if any, is intended for Sir Arthur Beauchamp, and he must look after his own affairs," said the Baronet, determined not to see, or rather not to acknowledge that he saw, what was going on.

"Oh, of course, Sir Hildebrande, Sir Arthur is implicated, and he knows it. He has already canvassed his supporters, and seems to be very certain of his seat. But you see, unhappily, we have done nothing yet, and it is sometimes very difficult to make up for lost time; and it is not wise, in matters of this sort, to let your opponent get the start of you. Therefore I ventured to hint that we had better set to work at once. It will not do, Sir Hildebrande, to trifle with our chance any longer. This new man has a winning tongue, and knows

how to use it. He has already got the promise of a large number of votes ; and besides that, he has plenty of money to buy those that he cannot get by persuasion."

Sir Hildebrande winced and groaned as if under the hands of the dentist, but said nothing, and Mr. Parkinson, knowing well that there would be a grand explosion by-and-by, and that he had better say as much as he could before it came, continued speaking rapidly but distinctly,—

"If I might be allowed to recommend, I would suggest that copies of your address should be printed on handbills, circulated very early to-morrow morning, and followed by your own appearance in the town, and that you should form a committee to carry out your election, and assist you in a personal canvass."

"Hold, sir! what do you take me for?" exclaimed Sir Hildebrande, starting up in a rage. "Say that again, and I will kick you out of the room! You scoundrel! do you suppose I am going to demean myself by entering into the detail of pettifogging electioneering canvassing, talking to dirty men, and allowing them to talk to me? Faugh! none of this, sir. I will lose my election

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THEY WERE THE ONLY TWO IN THE WORLD
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Mr. H. then resumed and granted as it under the name of the Senate, but not so doing, and Mr. Farnsworth, in reply, said that there would be a grant on the 1st of January, and that he had better say a word or so connected with it came, continued speaking in this manner.—

"I might be able well to recommend, I suggest that copies of your address should be printed on handbills, circulated very early in the morning, and followed by your appearance in the town, and that you should have a committee to carry out your mission, and that you in a personal canvass."

—Hold, sir! what do you want me to do?
claimed Sir Hildebrand, starting.

" Say that again, and I will leave the room ! You scoundrel ! You dare not to demean myself by repeating what I have said."

pettifogging dissembling
dirty men, and allowing
Faugh! some of the

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sooner than do anything of the kind! If the voters are insolent enough to vote against *me*, let them, I care not. Begone home, Mr. Parkinson!"

The attorney waited for the ebullition to subside; but instead of walking out of the door, to the neighbourhood of which he retreated, he advanced towards his patron, and gently but firmly insinuated that "unless Sir Hildebrande had, unknown to him, Mr. Parkinson, lately discovered a gold-mine, or been bereaved of some ancient aunt, with untold thousands in her stocking, he could not *afford* to lose the seat in Parliament."

This argument Sir Hildebrande perfectly understood, and, compressing his lips, sat down again; and his eye catching the papers on the table, Mr. Parkinson's hint took double effect.

Silence ensued for some time, broken at last by the peevish inquiry of the Baronet, "What am I to do first?"

CHAPTER XXV.

"Therefore the vulgar did about him flock,
And cluster thick unto his leasings vain,
Like foolish flies about an honeycrock;
In hope by him great benefit to gain,
And uncontrolled freedom to obtain."

SPENSER.

"Some ne'er advance a judgment of their own,
But catch the spreading notion of the town."

POPE.

A CONTESTED election for the Northern Division of Oddshire! No wonder people talked in whispers and walked about in amazement. No wonder eyes were turned up and mysterious winks exchanged. Such a thing had never occurred in the annals of the county within the memory of man.

Persons, quiet, unassuming, hitherto overlooked, suddenly arose to consequence. They were told they possessed votes; they received live baronets within their humble domiciles, and the *honour* of their vote and interest was humbly sued for by

the anxious countenance of the young farmer above mentioned; he observed him to be looking eagerly for some one, and rightly guessed the person sought for to be himself. He marked the great demand for newspapers. All these observations, finding their way to head-quarters, were in due time acted upon.

The wig and spectacles having done their duty, were discarded, and the Government agent walked forth himself again. The original stranger might once more be seen on the market-day hastily passing among the assembled farmers: with shy delight his appearance was hailed by many, though not one man ventured to address him until dusk, so afraid was each one of his neighbour.

A few days after was the statute fair, and simultaneously with the announcement of the dissolution appeared large placards on every wall and barn throughout the Northern Division of Oddshire. These papers were addressed to the independent electors. In them Sir Charles Blake respectfully requested the favour of their votes, made great protestations of political virtue, and with the earliest day an active personal canvass began.

Sir Charles Blake, accompanied by two of the county gentlemen, who were not afraid of being seen in opposition to a man whom they had long inwardly despised, called upon the most influential men in the town, and made a very extensive acquaintance among the voters in the fair, when he talked agriculture, and did the popular with great success; and before night had obtained a tolerable footing in the very stronghold of the Comptaynes, and considered that, having, done that, the conquest of the rest of the county would be comparatively easy.

The actual canvass occasioned much surprise among the people, who were not used to the sort of thing, and did not know how it was managed. They found their hands shaken by gentlemen in kid gloves, and their wives and daughters joked with and complimented by a real live "barrow-knight." It passed anything in their experience of life.

For, though Sir Arthur Beauchamp was a kind neighbour and a popular man, the want of opposition had hitherto never necessitated his descending into the minutiae of a personal canvass, and all that popularity-hunting which, however gulped down

for the sake of expediency, must ever be repugnant to the gentleman of taste and feeling.

Such good use had Sir Charles Blake made of his time that, ere night, his praises were in every one's mouth who dared to speak out, and all had some instance of his pleasantness and condescension on record. Many were the stories of his good nature, and numerous were the *promises* made by him in the course of that day.

"To the father of eight he promised promotion,
For his son in the army or lad on the ocean."

How many a buxon dame lauded him to the skies, for had he not sat down in her kitchen, persisting it was as clean as his own drawing-room, praised her currant wine, kissed the baby, pronounced the poor little wizen thing the finest child he ever saw, and inquired the names and ages of all the rest?

In fine, Sir Charles had taken considerable trouble to do the popular, and his efforts had been appreciated.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The gentleman must know all the several branches
Into which a contested election now launches.
He is expected to visit each tradesman's shop,
Buy a canary from one, from another a top;
Pay five guineas for this, and six guineas for that,
While ten more are given for a shabby old hat."

ANON.

SIR CHARLES BLAKE, who has suddenly started up as candidate for the honour of representing the northern Division of Oddshire, has been in an early chapter mentioned as a city man, and a rejected aspirant to the hand of Miss Comptayne. His refusal by Sir Hildebrande was worded in such a manner as bitterly to gall any man of respectability, and was felt to be particularly insulting by Sir Charles, as he was aware that he, with his wealth and connections, was quite as good a *parti* as the penniless Judith Comptayne had any right to expect. Whether the lady herself ever knew of his proposals, he was ignorant, but he did not intend troubling himself any more about her; and his wounded pride soon

enabled him to overcome his *penchant*; and marrying in a few months the daughter of a Lord Chancellor, awaited for the time when he might discover a way of revenging himself upon the Comptayne family for their insulting behaviour.

Though the husband of a young and handsome wife, Sir Charles Blake was neither young nor handsome himself. He was forty-five years old at least, a tall, stout, rather heavy-looking personage, but with a countenance that lighted up brilliantly when interested. He was a thoroughly well-educated man; had travelled a great deal in foreign countries; had an inexhaustible fund of information, and an anecdote apropos to any subject that might be started; could express himself fluently in several languages, and make himself agreeable in every style of society. He had twice been Lord Mayor, and when Majesty conferred on him the dignity of Baronet, he was considered by all to have been "sarved perfectly right."

With Sir Charles Blake's powers of elocution, and political opinions coinciding with those of the existing Government, the Premier, feeling a little shaky, considered that the co-operation of a man like the city baronet would have a steadying pro-

perty, and be of very great advantage to him. He, therefore, having decided upon dissolving Parliament, and throwing himself, as the expression is, upon the country, caused overtures to be made to Sir Charles Blake, to permit himself to be put in nomination for some borough or shire at the approaching general election.

Though feeling much flattered by this request, Sir Charles hesitated, as being recently married; and, projecting a tour abroad on the conclusion of the London season, he did not care to encumber himself just at that time with Parliamentary duties. He had resigned all business, and intended, after showing his bride a little of the Continent, to purchase an estate—in which county he had not decided—and settle down quietly as a country gentleman.

With these views, Sir Charles had almost determined upon postponing public business for a couple of years at least, and was on the point of signifying the same to Government; when, in conversation with some members of his club, it was casually suggested to him that, with a very little trouble, Sir Hildebrande Comptayne might be supplanted in the Northern Division of Oddshire.

At the mention of that name, his wish for revenge, which had been only lying dormant a few months, started into fresh life, and the final answer to the Premier was postponed.

The idea of cutting out Sir Hildebrande Compayne, of forcing him to vacate his long-established stronghold, was delightful in the extreme. The idea of punishing in a tender point the man who had so rudely scorned his suit, pleased him mightily. Could he only persuade his bride to be satisfied with a trip to the Highlands after the elections, he could do it. The more he pondered over it, the more charms the idea seemed to possess; and upon consulting Lady Blake, her husband discovered that he should meet with no opposition there, as her ladyship had a lurking desire to see M.P. after his name, and would for that purpose gladly forego the promised excursion. This decided Sir Charles, and he immediately signified to Government his readiness to stand for the Northern Division of Oddshire.

With most insinuating manners, a full purse, and a private as well as a political desire for success, Sir Charles and Lady Blake arrived in Oddborough, with fine carriages, handsome horses, and

a large retinue, and took up their quarters at the principal hotel. They were located in the town some days before anything was positively known respecting the dissolution, and their apparent purpose was the purchase of a country seat. They took every opportunity of seeing and being seen. They drove and rode about the country in every direction ; visited many places that were for sale or hire ; renewed their London acquaintance with many of the resident gentry, and accepted their hospitalities. They attended the races, patronised the theatre, and bought largely at a fancy bazaar for the benefit of the Dispensary.

It would have surprised any one who stopped to think, how it was that Lady Blake, a bride who had just got an extensive and magnificent trousseau from Paris, could require so many articles of dress as were purchased at the shops at Odd-borough, into which her ladyship or her ladyship's maid entered daily, and from which huge parcels were sent home, and paid for with ready money. Thus by her beauty, urbanity, and liberality, Lady Blake had won everyone's heart long before the time came for requesting their votes ; and Sir Charles had dined and made friends with the



Beauchamp family before a syllable was breathed of his electioneering intentions; and Sir Arthur was as much surprised as the rest of the world on seeing the placards addressed to the independent electors.

Sir Arthur both liked and respected Sir Charles Blake, and would have been very glad to have him both for a colleague and a neighbour. Though their political opinions did not quite coincide in many points, each thought essential; and though, when in Parliament, one might be numbered among the ayes and the other among the noes in a division, yet the elder gentleman had sense enough to know that truth was much more likely to be elicited by the arguments of rational, well-informed men of a younger generation and fresher intellect with those that were passing away, than if the reins of government were to be solely entrusted to the old and consequently more or less crotchetty members. Sir Arthur was not inclined to yield his own opinions without a struggle, but he had no objection to listen to those of other people. The state of stagnation into which the Northern Division of Oddshire had subsided was a frequent source of lamentation to him; but he had hitherto imagined,

and he never inquired of himself on what foundation, that it could not be helped—that it must be endured—that the prestige of the Comptayne family was so firmly established that there was no chance of ever shaking it, and consequently of ever improving the state of things.

Thus, though Sir Arthur hailed the approaching contest as a little pleasing variety, he never appeared to realise the idea that the Comptayne dynasty was like to fall. He prepared to canvass the county (needlessly, his friends told him, as no interference with his seat was contemplated) because he did not think it respectful to the electors to take his return so completely as a matter of course, and not worth any trouble on his part; and, moreover, from a wish to become better acquainted with his constituents, of many of whom he really knew nothing. His visits were received everywhere with pleasure and respect, though he did not lay himself out to do the popular quite so strongly as Sir Charles Blake. He simply acted like a good, hearty English squire as he was, and the votes were promised before asked for. His canvass cost him nothing in fact, speeches or promises never apparently

having been expected from *him*. The matter of the obnoxious taxes had been fairly talked over with many of the farmers; and though their crude notions and new ideas were not quite those of Sir Arthur, he contrived to satisfy them that he would act and vote as he thought the most beneficial for their interests.

To every one who did not quite understand the merits of the case, Sir Charles Blake's canvass did not look very prosperous, for he scarcely got any promises; but he was quite content with the progress he was making. He had shaken the faith of the electors in the supremacy of Sir Hildebrande, which was a most important step; he had made them feel that the yoke galled them; and the idea that it was possible to free themselves had been presented to their minds, and was fast taking possession of them. They were beginning to whisper over the matter to each other.

A contested election, as managed in those days (we do not know whether there is any improvement in them now), was, generally speaking, a disgusting piece of work, as bringing out, in strong relief, all the evil tempers, bad passions,

and dishonest propensities of human nature ; but, even then, it was, perhaps, better than the servile remains of the feudal system existing in those counties and boroughs which possessed hereditary legislators. In a county election all the black-guardism, bribery, intimidation, cajolery, and roguery cannot be carried on to the extent that it is in many a borough contest, the demoralising effects of which are hardly if ever eradicated. Candidates address the half-tipsy voters as "*Gentlemen*," and twaddle over independence and purity of election. Faugh ! Talk of the purity of the streets of Cologne !

Though Sir Hildebrande Comptayne fully comprehended, long ere the close of his interview with Mr. Parkinson, that not only was his hereditary seat in Parliament assailed, but absolutely undermined, he still persisted in his dogged resolution to take no trouble with the concern himself ; and it was, as we have seen, only after repeated solicitations on the part of his man of business, that he went so far as to inquire what was the first thing he ought to do. His apathy was such that Mr. Parkinson imagined that his patron did not realise the turn affairs were taking,

and reproached himself for not having spoken out in stronger language; he thought also that Sir Hildebrande could not distinctly comprehend all that depended upon his continuing to fill the part of M.P.

But Mr. Parkinson was mistaken: his master was entirely alive to the emergency of the case, but powerless to act; he could not make up his mind to do what he knew was the only thing to be done,—namely, to canvass the county,—to go round to every individual door like a common mendicant, a mender of umbrellas, such as he had met with in his rides,—to beg,—to solicit the favour of “the vote and interest” of the “common people” at the next election. How was *he* to do it? To shake hands (as he had read in books was the custom on such occasions) with every man, if at home, or leave a card and his compliments if out; to inquire with a semblance of interest for their wives and families; to listen to all their conversations about crops and sick babies; to be expected to remember whose children had had the measles and whose children the whooping-cough during the last twelvemonth; in fact, to do what never Comptayne yet had done

—the popular!—to associate on familiar terms with the dregs of the people, the scum of society!

By the way, we should be glad to be enlightened as to the reason why these terms are severally applied to the same individual. How can a man be at once the *dregs* and the *scum*? How can he be at the same time the *top* and the *bottom* of society? We should sooner apply the word *scum* to the Comptayne family and their kind; and consider the good useful truth to lie betwixt and between.

But to continue. A Comptayne asking a favour! Many a torturing hour did our Baronet pass before he could make up his mind to do more than announce, in a handbill, his intention of standing again for the county.

The wording of the important handbill he left entirely to Mr. Parkinson, refusing even to look over the rough draught which that gentleman had brought for his inspection. Thus left to himself, the attorney with considerable tact and judgment made a “very neat thing” of it, taking care to say a great deal more for his patron than he would have dared to do had Sir Hildebrande retained the right of supervision.

Independently of his reluctance to flourish upon all the dead walls and barns of the county, Sir Hildebrande had another cogent reason for declining to draw up his address to his constituents. He had heard read by Mr. Parkinson those of the other two candidates, and found that they had considered it necessary to express some decided political opinions, to make some remarks upon passing events. He, Sir Hildebrande, had he taken pen in hand to frame a similar document, would have been sorely puzzled what to write: he was never very clever at expressing himself on paper, when he had anything to say; but, under these circumstances, he must have come to a halt. For he had nothing to say. He was not aware of having any political opinions in particular; he supposed they were the same as his father's before him. He had never troubled his head about politics; he seldom showed himself in his seat, never spoke, rarely listened, and had only voted when some measure touching the aristocracy was brought forward. He did not know what Government was about; he had not even inquired why this troublesome dissolution was considered necessary. He had no intention of doing anything

more than he always had done ; so where was the use of making all this cackle about it ?

But with the alternative staring him in the face of a prison or parliament, he felt something must be done a little out of his usual course ; and he so far roused himself as to give Mr. Parkinson carte-blanche to draw upon him for any political opinions he required, and not trouble him any more upon detestable business. Sir Hildebrande shut himself up in his library, refusing to see anyone, and passed his time in the stupor of despair.

Though in a county election absolute bribery cannot be resorted to, yet there remain many other ways of making the money fly ; and the purest election that ever was carried has always cost something. Sir Charles Blake's pockets were—and were known to be—full ; he was a man of substance and interest. Sir Hildebrande's pockets were—and were known to be—empty ; he was a man of cobweb.

We have left Sir Arthur Beauchamp out of the question, as it was almost immediately perceived that the contest would in no way affect him.

Sir Charles was easy, gentlemanly, and cordial

in demeanour, and good-natured in countenance : his canvassing manners appeared natural. Sir Hildebrande was stiff, pompous, silent, and moody, leaving all the talking to be done by his companions ; therefore his canvass, when he did set about it, was so palpably against the grain as to be utterly useless, and a source of annoyance to those who were doing their utmost to serve him ; thus several of his supporters retired in disgust, refusing any longer to help a man whose absurd pride would not permit his helping himself.

We must observe that in this case no bribery was attempted ; the money was all spent above board in a friendly jovial sort of way by Sir Charles. But Sir Hildebrande had no money either to treat with or to pay his bills with ; he had sense enough to feel that it would be worse than useless to ask a man for his support whose unpaid bill of three or four years' standing he had in his pocket ; and he resolutely refused to go to those persons. Neither could he expect that a stiff shake of the hand *now* would obliterate the remembrance of many years' unneighbourliness. Lady Comptayne's cards and invitations to dinner would not make amends for the manner in which

the existence of the Misses C or B had been hitherto ignored by "The Grange" family.

The awkward attempts of the Comptaynes at popularity were extremely ludicrous; caused a great deal of amusement throughout the neighbourhood; and was likened, by-the-way, to the dancing of a bear. Many were the squibs and epigrams circulated at their expense, as soon as the hereditary awe of the autocrat had begun to wear off. The discomfiture at "The Grange" was very apparent, and the cause of many a joke; but we must do the good people the justice to say that they were entirely ignorant what a very critical life or death moment it was to the Comptaynes. They were known to be poor, and it surprised people that they should engage in a contest with so little chance of eventually gaining the day as Sir Hildebrande appeared to have; but very few were aware of their positive distress, and that, should he lose his election, there was every probability of bailiffs making their appearance before many days were over; as the numerous creditors were beginning to think that they had waited long enough for their money. Had all this been known in the neighbourhood,

though their dislike would have remained the same, many a one would have hushed his laugh, and many a joke would have been smothered in its birth.

Mr. Stubbs knew all; but Mr. Stubbs said nothing: it was no concern of his; he had not resided long enough in the county to claim a vote; and he kept in the background a silent spectator of the contest, and only occasionally indulging in a joke or remark in private with Sir Arthur or his nephew.

Meanwhile Mr. Parkinson's position was not an enviable one; it was no sinecure. The poor harassed attorney was almost at his wit's end. Sir Hildebrande professed to leave everything in his hands; and, as far as acting went, he certainly did not trouble himself; but on points of importance he grew restive, would interfere, and insist upon no measure of consequence being entered into without his concurrence; and then, when Mr. Parkinson came over to "The Grange" to consult with him, he would keep him for hours wasting valuable time. His indecision amounted almost to imbecility; and though his adviser endeavoured to show him that every minute was

precious, and that their opponent was gaining ground while they were dallying and disputing upon punctilio in a most childish manner, it was of no use. No energy could be infused into the torpid soul of the Baronet. Lady Comptayne was at last appealed to by the attorney, who requested that she would use her influence in persuading Sir Hildebrande to engage more earnestly with his canvassing.

But when he got his patron to the door of a voter, the promptings and the pushings necessary to make the Baronet conduct himself even with the semblance of propriety nearly exhausted the mental and physical energies of the attorney, who, more than once, was on the point of throwing the whole thing up, and leaving Sir Hildebrande to his fate; but the knowledge that if he did, the failure would be all laid to his door, and, moreover, his hereditary connection with the family, made him loth to leave the old ship as long as the planks would hold together; and it might so happen that they could pull through after all. Oh, what a triumph that would be! and one for which he would take care to claim the whole credit!

The canvass concluded in a most unsatisfactory

manner. The preparations for the nomination were the great trouble, and one upon which poor Mr. Parkinson's patience was nearly stranded. With his impracticable master his genius certainly proved itself to be patience; for the puerile manner in which Sir Hildebrande raised objections and placed obstacles in his assistant's way, was enough to excite a smile had it not been of such vital importance to the business in hand.

"May it please you, Sir Hildebrande, to decide upon the colour you will show at the nomination; or will you allow me to inquire of her ladyship? We have no time to lose, for the banner will have to be made and painted, and we shall also require some bows and cockades for your supporters and attendants."

"I do not intend having anything of the kind, Mr. Parkinson. My father never had, and what necessity can there be for me to have any such nonsense?"

"I am quite aware, Sir Hildebrande, that it never *has been* the custom in this family; but on the present occasion, in consequence of this unhappy opposition, it is perfectly necessary. Sir Arthur Beauchamp has ordered blue; Sir Charles

Blake's colour is red; may I suggest green, or would you and her ladyship prefer orange?"

"You may venture to suggest neither the one colour nor the other," said the Baronet, waxing wrath. "I repeat, what you ought to know by this time, no Comptayne ever thought it necessary to follow the fashion of the common herd."

Mr. Parkinson ventured to hint that the last expression which fell from the lips of his patron, namely, "common herd," was not one in general use upon the occasion of a contested election; and the suggestion called forth an explosion of wrath which the ill-starred attorney had to bear with the best grace he could. After giving his patron time to cool, and mentioning, by-the-way, a few trivial things, he returned again to the charge, as it was a point which must be settled immediately; and one, upon which he demurred taking the whole responsibility. He ventured to say the word "green," and receiving no answer, felt he was quite justified in taking silence for consent, and went on his way to order green.

Our lady friends who see no particular difficulty in giving the order at a mercer's for a certain number (we, not being a family man,

cannot pretend to say how many) of yards of silk for a dress, cannot enter into the feelings of our unlucky friend as he left Comptayne Grange on his mission of ordering the banner and favours for the election. He could have bought his wife a new gown and himself a dozen of shirts and silk handkerchiefs with the greatest ease, and thought of nothing but how he could best show his taste and judgment in those matters. But this banner was an utterly different thing, though he had the colour in his memory and the inscription in his memorandum book. It was a sore point;—it was a source of extreme annoyance. Mr. Parkinson felt it to be so in this wise.

The attorney knew, from hearing the manners and customs of other places, that it was the right thing to purchase all that was necessary for the show from the shop of a constituent. But, alas! the mercers at Oddborough had all a little account against the Comptayne family, and their bills were lying on the library table at “The Grange;” and to enter their doors would only be to run the risk of a gentle reminder, or, at least, they would insist upon the order being immediately changed into money, which, under exist-



ing circumstances, was not particularly convenient; and if he should send elsewhere to obtain credit, dire offence would be taken, and the cause might be seriously damaged.

Mr. Parkinson, in a strait between self-interest and habit, at length yielded to the latter; having a certain *esprit de corps* with the Comptayne family, he felt that he must risk the former. He knew that, in the present state of the Comptayne finances, it would be worse than useless to ask for even a five-pound note to carry on the warfare, and, therefore, he must do as well as he could without; at the same time endeavouring to keep up appearances, which, in electioneering business, is more than half the battle. Though in his inmost heart he had scarcely a hope of success, the man of business felt it incumbent on him not to let his apprehensions be visible, but to keep up a good face to the last. After vainly inquiring of himself what was to be done in this emergency, Mr. Parkinson at last determined to act upon his own responsibility, not taking Mrs. Parkinson into council at all; for he conjectured that the careful soul would point with maternal anxiety at the nine pledges of their love, and bid him not make a fool of himself.



He would, therefore, unknown to any one, advance the sum necessary to decorate the Comp-tayne procession out of his own private purse, feeling, at the same time, that there was not the faintest chance of his being repaid for that or any other of his exertions; nay, it was even doubtful whether he might not receive considerable abuse for the liberty he had taken.

But, then, no man likes to be on the losing side if he can help it, and on this principle both argued and acted Mr. Parkinson.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Lo! the deciding hour at last appears,
The hour of every freeman's hopes and fears!"

AKENSIDE.

THE twenty-eighth of August, the day fixed for the nomination, arrived, and found Mr. Parkinson worn to skin and bone by his exertions to keep up, what every day proved to be a tottering cause, with swaggering manner but faintness at heart.

Sir Hildebrande and Lady Comptayne were more haggard and careworn than ever; and, though both were deeply impressed with the insecurity of the ground upon which they stood, both were—reluctant will not do, it is not a forcible expression enough to depict their sentiments,—both were alike repugnant to abate one iota from their accustomed manners and customs; they could not be persuaded into curtailing one atom of their family pride; and as to Sir Hildebrande being under the necessity of asking, as a favour, what he had hitherto claimed as an hereditary

right, nearly burst their heartstrings in two. The struggle between necessity and inclination, or rather habit, was painful to behold, and bid fair thoroughly to unsettle the never very strong intellects of the Baronet and his lady.

The girls did not understand much of what was going on, as no discussions took place before them; and never having enjoyed the confidence of either parent, they knew nothing of their motives or springs of action at any time, and much less now in this crisis in the family affairs. They were fain to do as they were bid, and obey contradictory orders in the best manner they could—that is to say, Judith and Beatrix, for Abigail flatly refused to act otherwise than she always had done; and they drew their own conclusions, which were far from correct, for the reason of the extraordinary commands they received. They were peremptorily desired to descend from the height of their dignity, and play the civil to such and such persons, to whom they had never spoken before; to sit well forward in the carriage, and bow with smiling condescension to every one they met with in their drive. To Judith this was all a pleasing variety in reality, though she felt it due to her position, as



Miss Comptayne, to make a very useless protest against it. Beatrix, young and buoyant, was delighted by the permission to be her own natural self, and to be allowed to say as many kind things as she liked. Abigail sulked, and refused to do the popular. Our private opinion is, that she could not have done it had she tried.

The Beauchamp ladies had gone on as usual. Always civil and friendly, no change was necessary; and the preparations for the approaching double wedding divided their thoughts, and also prevented their seeing much of the Comptaynes, whom it was the daily amusement of some persons to meet and watch upon their popularity-hunting expeditions.

Sir Charles and Lady Blake had been very active, showing much tact in their behaviour towards the Comptayne-ridden constituents; and by saying the right thing in the right place, and to the right person, they had succeeded in most effectually undermining the dynasty of the Comptaynes.

* * * * *

With the earliest day the town began to fill. People of every sort, and in every manner, flocked

right, nearly burst their cheeks the colours of his man. struggle between the description, from the wheel-rather habit, was told John Simkins, the man with-thoroughly to be brought by his grandson to see the intellects of the carriage-and-four of the sheriff,

The girl other in the market-place. Blue—going on blue—predominated, and was fre—and r blended with one of the other colours; for par—the contest was between the green and the red. at—between parasols and red streamers were worn alike by mothers and maidens, the young and the old. Never had Oddborough beheld such an assemblage of gaily-dressed people. The holiday was general. The majority of the company was simply attracted by the novelty of the occurrence; and many had mounted the colour he or she thought the prettiest, as the real meaning was not quite understood by a set of folks to whom the whole affair was quite strange and unprecedented. They had no vote; they had no real interest in the business of the day; they came to look on; and, as one man said, to “see one barrowknight a-pitching it in to t’other barrowknight.”

The gentry and the principal voters remained in the background the first part of the morning, in

order to receive and swell the processions of their respective candidates; but the agents, or whippers-in, of the different parties might be seen very busy amongst the crowd, and in many cases effecting a change of colour.

At eleven o'clock, when the crowd was just beginning to thicken, it was time for the fun to commence; the band struck up, and, by its choice of tune, gave token of the approach of the "Fine old English gentleman:" and presently Sir Arthur Beauchamp rode into the square, accompanied by his nephew and a host of the gentlemen of the neighbourhood. He was received with genuinely enthusiastic cheers. The windows and balconies now began to fill with the county ladies, gaily decked out with the colours of the day.

Soon after the arrival of Sir Arthur, the old lumbering coach of the Comptaynes was heard, and came preceded by poor Mr. Parkinson's banner, inscribed simply "Comptayne for ever;" for the attorney could think of no motto in electioneering use which he dared to appropriate; the tawny liveries adorned with green bows, which were also shown by a very respectable body of people, collected by the untiring energy of Mr. Parkinson, to

make up a procession. Had it not been for the good nature of Sir Arthur and his followers, the advent of Sir Hildebrande would have been met with funereal silence. (But, as Sir Arthur remarked to his friends, "Let us give the old gentleman a cheer; it will be bad enough for him to-morrow without mortifying him to-day.")

After waiting long enough for the mob to be calmed, and just hitting off the minute to make a good impression, Sir Charles Blake dashed into the square in an elegant barouche-and-four, accompanied by several carriages full of ladies, and a numerous *cortège* of horsemen from a distant part of the county. This apparition, so different to anything the simple townsfolk and rustics had ever seen or heard of before, took them quite by surprise, and the cheering was tremendous.

Sir Charles Blake having alighted and joined the other gentlemen on the hustings, the business of the day began. The writ being read, the hereditary proposer and the hereditary seconder of the Comptaynes did their duty, and did it well. They gave their man credit for energy, activity, patriotism, and political principles, which most thoroughly astonished the honourable gentleman

himself, who was not aware before of having any such virtues in his possession: however, he supposed they knew best, and was satisfied. They made promises in his name with most sponsorial license, and seemed to treat their candidate as if he were a baby in long clothes. In all this the Baronet was not likely to quarrel with them; as, if it were necessary that such things should be said, why, he would much rather listen to than say them.

The other proposers and seconders said their say, and lauded their men, as in duty bound, to the skies, as "the only men on earth, look where you might, in any way suited to the emergencies of the independent electors of the Northern Division of Oddshire."

When it came to the turn of Sir Hildebrande to speak, Mr. Parkinson's agony became extreme. At first it was very doubtful whether he would be heard at all, so numerous were the hisses, the cries, and snatches of doggrel regarding bills and other Comptayne misdemeanours. But Sir Arthur Beauchamp, exerting his gentlemanly influence over the excited mob, begged a quiet hearing, for which act of courtesy Mr. Parkinson did not thank



him, for he knew that his patron had nothing to say, and that the speech which had been prepared by him would look much better in the county papers if not heard at all from the hustings. To the immense relief of the attorney, Sir Hildebrande merely stepped forward and said,—

“Gentlemen, my friends Mr. Stanly and Major Wightson have so ably expressed my sentiments that they have left me nothing more to say.”

Sir Arthur Beauchamp, accustomed to speak in the House and at county meetings, was a good and popular speaker; but on this occasion he did not say much, anxious, for his old colleague's sake, to get the business over. What he did say was good-humoured, sensible, and to the purpose. He wound up by promising,—

“To do what he considered best for the county in general, and Oddborough in particular; but that he would not bind himself never to change his mind, as he did not think consistency meant always keeping to the same opinion, uninfluenced by passing events or maturity of judgment. He did not feel, though he was past sixty, that he was too old to learn. He should try to learn; he saw new things starting up around him every day, and he

heard new ideas advanced, and he meant to examine all for himself, and use his intellects for the benefit of his country, if they saw fit to do him the honour to re-elect him. (Cries of "Ay, that we will! you're the right sort, you are.") He wished to be fully understood. He was not going to take up every new-fangled notion because it was new; he was not going to bind himself to support any particular man; he was not going to vote in any way merely to please them. He would go into Parliament unfettered by any promise, save to do the best he could for his native country. They had known each other a long time, and he thought they might trust him. (Cries of "That we will, Sir Arthur! you're a gentleman, you are.") Now, as for those taxes which seem to have made such a commotion lately, they might be quite sure he would do what he could. They must not suppose that he liked paying taxes any better than they did. But every one knew, if they would give themselves the trouble to think about it, that a certain amount of taxation was necessary to keep the Government going, to support the army and navy, and many other things, which would take up too much time to enumerate. It

was simply the business of the Parliament to arrange the taxes so that they might cause the least expense in the collecting, and fall upon the people in the least obnoxious manner. For his part, he did not see how they were to settle this grievous point to the satisfaction of everybody. No doubt the young ladies whom he saw in the balconies would be desirous to have the duty taken off silk goods, while their mammas would be equally anxious on the subject of tea. The younger gentlemen would call out for a repeal of the tobacco duties, and their 'governors' would raise their voice against the malt-tax. (Cheers and laughter.) So what was a poor man to do to please everybody? A man in his position could not undertake that. He would therefore end his address as he had begun it, and promise to act in the manner in which, upon mature consideration, he deemed the best for the interest of Great Britain; and that if he were so unfortunate as to fail in giving satisfaction to his old constituents, why, they were quite at liberty to tell him so, and to break the tie any day they pleased. They need not re-elect him if they did not like him." (Vociferous cheering from all colours.)



Sir Charles Blake's address was far more lengthy. He entered into more particulars, and was at infinite pains to make his hearers understand what liberal intentions he had regarding their county in particular; but did not care to dwell upon England in general. His promises of all sorts of good things were very profuse, and, we thought, rather indiscriminate. Though not a very young man, Sir Charles was a very young public speaker. This was his first attempt on the hustings, and, to use our friend A. K. H. B.'s excellent definition, his oration was somewhat "vealy." But as there were many in the audience who would not have appreciated stronger meat, it suited the purpose very well, and being interlarded with much anecdote, it elicited great approbation from others besides the Reds.

When the speechifying was over, a show of hands was called for, and declared to be in favour of the Blue and the Red. Sir Hildebrand's proposer was then reduced to the humiliating necessity of demanding a poll for his candidate, which was accordingly granted by the Sheriff, and fixed for the two following days at specified localities; and with three cheers for the sheriff, the business of the day concluded.

We shall not attempt to describe the state of feeling with which Sir Hildebrande left the hustings. He tottered down the stairs and entered his carriage, the perturbation of his countenance and ashy paleness exciting the observation of all. Many were the remarks made on his discomfiture, and more than one spectator exclaimed, "We should not have thought Sir Hildebrande would have taken it so much to heart." A few knew that it was a matter of life and death to the unfortunate Baronet, and they did not wonder—they pitied.

A Comptayne reduced to be the object of pity !

Mr. Parkinson and Lady Comptayne vainly endeavoured to raise Sir Hildebrande from the stupor which had seized upon him immediately on entering the carriage; and on arriving at home he was conveyed to his bed in a state of insensibility, and the doctor hastily summoned.

How anxiously did Lady Comptayne wish for the presence of her eldest son in this emergency, for popularity must still be done. It was absolutely necessary, her advisers told her, that some of the family should show themselves, or the tottering cause would irrecoverably fall to the ground.

The family physician was frantically urged by Mr. Parkinson to patch up the Baronet, that he could appear in Oddborough for a couple of days ; after that he was at liberty to lie in bed as long as he pleased. Administer a strong opiate, and enjoin perfect quiet for twelve hours, was all that was in the power of the doctor, and he, shaking his head with doubt of the efficacy of his prescription, inquired, as many others had done,—

“Where is Captain Comptayne?”

Ah ! where was Captain Comptayne ? As soon as it had been made really clear to Sir Hildebrande that his election would be contested, he had sent for his son. The Baronet wanted the support of his arm, the prestige of his presence ; he also wanted him to propose to Miss Stubbs immediately, if affairs appeared to be taking a turn against him. But hitherto Captain Comptayne was not forthcoming. The fact was, that when his father's letter reached Aldershatt the gallant gentleman was at Boulogne, doing the domestic, and enjoying the society of Paulina and his children ; and as he never, for the best of reasons, left any address behind him on his departure for Boulogne, the letter remained on the table until his return.

As soon as he did receive his letter, had read it, and some remarks in the paper touching the pending election for Oddshire, he set off immediately for "The Grange," where he arrived on the morning following the nomination. An interview with Parkinson, to whom his mother referred him for particulars, placed him *au fait* with the salient points of the case, and also made him master of certain family secrets, of which he had hitherto been kept most carefully in ignorance. Captain Comptayne, until that morning, knew nothing of the abyss, on the brink of which the whole family were standing. He had always known that they were poor for their station, but he had not the faintest idea of the real state of their finances; and that a few weeks must bring on a crisis, when the fact of being M.P. would be his father's sole personal protection.

The Captain felt justly that he ought to have known all this sooner; but there was no time to argue that point—action of some sort was imperatively called for.

"What is to be done, Parkinson? what can I do?" exclaimed Captain Comptayne, excited out of the apathy and laziness into which he always

sank, when not in company with his wife and children. "I am not used to this sort of thing, but I will do anything you tell me. What can we do?"

"Move heaven and earth to secure the election, is the first thing," replied the attorney; "only let us gain that, and we shall have a little breathing time to consider our next move."

"And you think that a poor chance, do you not?"

"Between you and me, Captain, I fear it is a bad one; for you see, sir, your father has not got the gift of speaking—the gift of palavering the people; and then he has no money to spend, and he says that it does not become his dignity to make promises. Well! perhaps it does not; but, then, no one thinks of those sort of things in an election; and if we could have persuaded Sir Hildebrande to put his dignity into his pocket, we should have got on better."

"Well, Parkinson, it is no use talking of what might have been," interrupted the Captain, who in his inmost heart quite agreed with Mr. Parkinson's last words, but did not wish to encourage him in that strain; "we must settle what to do at once."

“Yes, Captain Comptayne, I understand. We must get Sir Hildebrande dressed as quickly as we can, and persuade Dr. Meadows to give him a stimulant to put a little life into him to-day, and then we must take him to Oddborough, and make him show himself to the people. Perhaps the very sight of him may have a good effect ; it may make some of the electors remember that they *always* have voted for the Comptaynes, and cause them to feel ashamed of going against the family.”

Mr. Parkinson then retired to the housekeeper's room to get some breakfast, and Captain Comptayne proceeded to his father's chamber, to secure his being put into condition for the day. Sir Hildebrande, having had a quiet night, was considerably better ; his spirits had risen, and he was glad to see his son. Sir Hildebrande was more like himself than when he was brought home on the previous day ; but, alas ! with returning consciousness, that unfortunately indomitable pride had started up again ; and it was extremely difficult to persuade him to get up and be dressed to go to Oddborough popularity-hunting.

At last the trio started.

Mr. Parkinson was correct in his surmise, that

some persons, when they saw Sir Hildebrande *in propria persona* walking about the streets, would return to their allegiance ; and, from mere force of habit, would record their votes in favour of a Comptayne. Accordingly, so many did, that during the first day the numbers were—Comptayne, 289 ; Blake, 225 ; and the old Baronet's spirits rose in proportion. But towards evening on the second day, after Sir Hildebrande, overcome with fatigue, had been driven home by his son, a large body of Sir Charles Blake's supporters appeared, and in two hours the tables were completely turned, and Sir Arthur Beauchamp and Sir Charles Blake announced as duly elected.

A note containing simply the word "Lost !" was handed to Captain Comptayne from Mr. Parkinson, who had remained behind in Oddborough to watch the proceedings, and who had not courage to encounter the scene at "The Grange."

Captain Comptayne turned hastily to the window, as he hoped unperceived, to read this laconic epistle, and to conceal his own countenance. But Sir Hildebrande, with nerves quickened by anxiety, was too sharp for him ;

with senses and suspicions alive to everything, he saw and suspected his son's manœuvre. The old man rose from his chair, and read the fatal word over Captain Comptayne's shoulders just as that gentleman, crumpling the note up, was about to thrust it into his pocket.

A shrill scream resounded through the apartment, and Sir Hildebrande, in a state of frenzy, screeching "Lost! lost!" rushed through the door, and, before his son could prevent him, had gained the stairs. The chase after him through galleries and passages, up stairs and down, continued for two hours. The screams of the unhappy man were terrific, and the greatest fears were entertained that he would do himself some mortal injury. All efforts to intercept him were unavailing, until nature gave way, and he sank exhausted in a death-like swoon!

Two medical men, being instantly sent for, had some difficulty in restoring Sir Hildebrande to consciousness; and when they had succeeded, it was only to cause a fresh attack of frenzy and dreadful screaming, together with frantic endeavours to leave his bed, to which they were obliged securely to fasten him. It was not until dawn of

day that the opiate took effect, and the patient fell into an uneasy sleep, in which he still muttered "Lost, lost!"

Lady Comptayne, who had been hastily removed from his room, as her presence seemed to excite him, was then permitted to re-enter; and, in company with one of the doctors, remained silently watching her husband's troubled countenance. After all that had happened, and all that she knew must eventually take place in the family, her ladyship's meditations could not be of a consoling description. We will not pry: we will leave her.





